



PHYSICAL LITERACY TELLS US THAT THE MORE VARIED SKILLS, EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES WE PARTAKE IN THE MORE SUITED OUR BODY WILL BE TO TRANSFER ONE SKILL TO ANOTHER ACTIVITY AND VICE VERSA.

PHYSICAL LITERACY: WHAT DOES READING HAVE TO DO WITH EXERCISE?

How sure are you walking on pavement? How about walking or running on grass, on wet floors, or perhaps on ice? The more we are exposed to something, the more we have a chance to build confidence with motion. This is the principle of physical literacy. It is defined as moving with confidence and competence in a wide variety of activities and environments.

As lucky Manitobans who deal with icy roads every year, we become better and better at slipping and sliding in our vehicles. You may even try it in an empty parking lot where you can “test” just how your vehicle slides on the ice. This develops and builds confidence and competence in dealing with the conditions at hand, and with practice you’ll have better control in unexpected circumstances. The same concept is at work when physiotherapists address injuries and help to re-establish function in your abilities as you resume regular activities of daily living, in sport, and at work.

The good news is the more you practice, in both repetition and variety, the better you will be able to accomplish a task. Until fairly recently (and even still for some) the thought was to focus on less variety and train specifically for one task. For example, if I want to play better tennis then all I have to do is play more tennis. And although it’s true that playing more

tennis will likely lead to better tennis, you may plateau and hit the proverbial wall.

Physical literacy tells us that the more varied skills, events and activities we partake in the more suited our body will be to transfer one skill to another activity and vice versa. So while you may not think that going for a swim or climbing up a wall or playing basketball will make you a better tennis player you may be wrong. Those activities challenge the body in ways tennis does not and the challenges your muscles, joints and nervous tissues are put through are constantly pushing the body to be stronger, more agile and more coordinated. The more chances your body has to challenge itself, in different ways, the more well rounded and versatile your physical skills will be.

Now this isn’t necessarily easy, especially in the presence of injury, pain and dysfunction within the body. Sometimes exercise/sport/workplace rehabilitation needs extra care in the assessment of your body’s movements, abilities and preference. That is where physiotherapists excel, helping guide you through any injury and making sure you get your movement, strength and physical literacy back to where you want it to be.

The great thing is that exercise always works; it makes us stronger, fit-

ter, leaner, and gives us more energy in our day, every time.

Physiotherapists encourage everyone to exercise and participate in active hobbies. However, sometimes we go about it a little too enthusiastically. Even if we are healthy and injury-free we need to be mindful of just how much physical literacy we are trying to accomplish, especially since most of us try to become fit in short, unsustainable bursts of time.

As an example, a common choice of exercise is running, yet a lot of runners get injured. In fact, up to 79 percent of runners suffer injuries due to running! This can be avoided by understanding common training errors like running too much or too fast, not having enough variety in intensity training, and maybe forgetting to incorporate enough rest during your training. Or even — and runners don’t want to hear this — running a little less and cross-training a little more. Especially since we now know that other activities will cross pollin-

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