

Slow and Steady...Has a Better Body

By Michael Lipowski, CFP

You remember the story, The Tortoise and the Hare, right? The moral of the story was "slow and steady wins the race". And nowhere does this ring truer than in the arena of physical development and bodybuilding.

The fact is we would all like to lose fat—*quickly*, build muscle—*quickly*, and achieve the body of our dreams—overnight. When it comes to anything related to fitness we (as in the majority of people) tend to think like and act like 'the Hare'. We believe that by going "all-out" we can get the results we want faster and make up for "lost ground".

Like the Hare, we are of the mind-set that we can always "catch-up" if we fall behind. We will pour every last drop of our energy into our training and diet extremely hard in an attempt to make up for the past months, and in some cases years, that we were not exercising or eating as we should have been. Within a few short weeks of this one-hundred and eighty degree turnaround we find ourselves physically and mentally "burnt-out" and needing to stop and take a rest. Our attempt to do too much, too fast, predictably...fails.

We then feel disappointed and hopeless. Figuring "if I can't have the body I want *now*, I can't have it at all", we give up and inevitably fall back into the condition we were in before and sometimes worse.

After a few months of sulking and eventually hitting rock-bottom, again, we decide it is time to attempt another all-out push. And just like the last time, when things don't happen fast enough, we throw our hands up in the air and yell out loud, "WHY BOTHER" and start our downhill tumble once again.

This process of pushing hard then pulling back is constantly repeated until one day we are so far gone from where we always dreamed of being that the dream dies.

It is not that any of us lack the physical ability to develop our 'dream body' but many of us lack the proper mental approach.

It is human nature to want things quickly and easily. However, what we want and what we can have are two different things. I often come across people who are stressed by their inability to make changes in their physique *immediately* or at least at a much faster rate. But what most fail to realize is that losing body-fat and building muscle FAST is like trying to climb Mt. Everest in a day...it just isn't happening—the body simply can't handle it. In the case of losing fat, trying to lose it fast is actually counterproductive because it results in the loss of muscle and a slowing of the metabolism. This consequently leads to fat being re-gained in excess of what you had before and at a much faster rate than previously.

Essentially, for us to be successful we need to be like 'the Tortoise'. We need to have a long-term outlook on the situation and understand that it is going to be a long journey and if we are to complete it we must be consistent and keep at a steady pace. I know this advice is not particularly exciting or revolutionary but it is the absolute truth and that is all I'm concerned with giving you (as disappointing as it may be). The more we deal with fact instead of fantasy or wishes the more rapidly results will come.

Unless you are some kind of genetic marvel it will take many months of doing things right, day in and day out just to get your body moving in the direction you want it to go. Once you've built up enough momentum you will start to see your body g-r-a-d-u-a-l-l-y changing. Do not expect to wake up one morning look in the mirror and say, "Finally!" These types of dramatic, exciting changes don't exist. It's not like the commercials where through the magic of television you get to see the individual's stomach magically shrink 12 inches before your very eyes. Expect to notice small changes every so often. These changes though not dramatic or particularly exciting do add up and get you to the place you want to be.

How long will it take? That depends on two things: 1) the severity of the situation, i.e., your starting point and 2) how many consecutive days, weeks, and months you can put together without disrupting or wavering from your training and nutrition program.

Although this approach may seem boring, unpleasant, and difficult, in the end it is the only one that works (from a physical standpoint). That's because the body needs time to adapt to changes in its structure and functional ability before it is prepared to make further changes. Simply put, the body cannot be rushed to change no matter how badly we'd like it to. There are stages of development it

must go through, a natural progression so to speak, which prepares it and puts it in position to welcome new changes.

Just like it takes years of intense, repetitive practice for one to master a certain instrument or sports skill before they are ready to display these skills on a professional level, it takes the same type of regular commitment and diligence to develop one's body. Even if your goals are not as lofty as displaying your physique on a "professional" level I can assure you that it takes this same type of perseverance over the long haul even for the "average" man or woman to achieve maximum fat-loss and muscular development for their body.

The more diligent we are about doing what's right for our bodies on a daily basis—as opposed to an intermittent one--the greater the likelihood of us actually achieving the body we're after. As the cliché goes, "Rome was not built in a day" and neither will your ideal physique.