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## **Defining Functional Fitness**

The majority of people in developed countries do not physically operate at the level which we were intended. Created to be hunters and gatherers, we are now largely a population of chair-bound, sedentary individuals. Technology and modern conveniences have caused our activity levels to drop to alarmingly low levels, while our health has declined at a proportional rate. Though physically less taxing, the quality of our lives is suffering greatly. What can we do to counter the ill effects of our "cushy" lifestyles?

For most of us, a return to hunting and gathering is not an option. Not many people possess the land necessary to reap and harvest their own foods or raise their own poultry and cattle. Very few geographical locations continue to sustain wild herds that are ripe for the hunting. But let's face it. How many of us would really want to go back to the hunting and gathering stage? We are completely reliant on our modern system of shipping and shopping to meet our needs. Unfortunately, driving to the grocery store and pushing a cart down the aisle do not constitute exercise and, as such, will not improve our fitness levels or our lives in general.

The only way we can take back our health from this monster of degeneration is to plan and execute physically functional movements that will return us to our pre-modern society state of health. So how do we accomplish that? I'll give you a hint. Carrying the grocery bags to the car is a functional movement.

No, I'm not suggesting you spend hours-a-day schlepping around bags full of groceries. My point is, if we look closely, we will discover our daily lives still demand that we move and function in ways that are similar to those required of our hunting, gathering predecessors. The only way we will be able to successfully perform such movements past our childhood years is to train and strengthen our bodies in ways that mimic those early human activities and prepare us to effectively meet the challenges of daily life. Our goal, then, is functional fitness which means we must engage in functional exercise. So what is functional exercise?

Let us first determine what it is not. Unfortunately, the majority of the fitness community is gravely missing the mark with regard to functionality and is misleading the public into a black hole of wasted time and effort. Functional has become an overused term in the library of fitness literature and has been butchered by the commercial fitness industry. This term has been erroneously applied to any number of useless movements produced on grossly overpriced equipment and an unlimited supply of infomercial gizmos and gadgets. Add to this the propensity toward muscle-specific weight training, and we have a fitness culture of great looking but functionally useless machines and human specimens. The sad truth is the physical exertion required to complete a repetition of any one of these movements lacks any parallel to reality. If we can't make it analogous to daily life, common sense would tell us it is not functional exercise.

Functional exercise replicates functional movement, that is, those movements we use to get average things done in our daily lives. Standing from a seated position, placing things overhead, pulling ourselves up, throwing, running, picking things up-these are all functional movements. A functional fitness regimen, then, would be one that utilizes functional exercises to address and enhance our ability to successfully complete these types of everyday tasks. Functional exercise allows our bodies to perform the way in which they were engineered. Squats, push ups, pull ups, deadlifts, box jumps, broad jumps, running-these are but a few of the tools in the CrossFit arsenal. Pared down gyms equipped with boxes and weights, D-balls and medicine balls, ropes and monkey bars are the fertile grounds from which functional fitness is born.

Our goal at CrossFit Kids is to educate and enthuse children and teens about functional fitness. We believe these will be the foundational experiences our children require to embark on lifelong journeys of wellness which will enable them to effectively perform simple, yet necessary tasks well into their adult years. Our dream is to foster a generation of healthy, fit individuals who require limited assistance and enjoy freedom of movement and activity throughout their life spans. To that end, we design each of our workouts with the varied modalities that will increase fitness levels across a broad spectrum of performance and health considerations. Always functional, never boring, CrossFit Kids resolves the issues of our sedentary, noxious lifestyles. Working the body according to the way it was designed, we are training a generation to take responsibility for their health via the path of least resistance.

### **Defining Functional Fitness for Kids**

As a CrossFit Kid, you've probably heard the term "functional fitness" a million times. Have you ever stopped to wonder what that means? Functional fitness uses movements that help your body function like it should, giving you the ability to get normal things done in your daily life.

Many years ago when men and women first began to inhabit Earth, they were equipped with certain physical abilities that allowed them to survive. These included the ability to run, jump, lift, throw, etc. Using these skills primitive man hunted, found and gathered plant foods, outran predators and moved from one location to the next, following herds and good weather. Life was hard, and pretty much the entire day was spent just trying to stay alive.

Life became a bit easier when individuals began to share the responsibilities of living as they settled into communities. Among these groups, each person had a job that kept the group functioning and thriving. Still, everyone worked hard and had to use the same physical strength and skills that kept their ancestors alive. As society became more organized, fewer people had to do work that was physically demanding. More people

worked in factories, offices and stores. They used their wages (paycheck) to pay for those things, such as food and shelter that once required men and women to exercise their own physical skills.