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Research Digest

Exclusive Sneak Peek

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Your brain on ketones: Does a ketogenic diet affect cognition, sleep, and mood?

Ketogenic diets affect nerves; that's why they're an effective treatment for some seizure disorders. But how these diets affect mood and cognition is less clear.

ERD Mini: WHO guidelines for reducing the risk of cognitive decline and dementia

There's no cure for dementia, but there are some clear modifiable risk factors. Here, we summarize the first-ever World Health Organization guidelines for reducing the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.

Under pressure: reducing salt intake to lower blood pressure

Does reducing salt intake actually reduce blood pressure? If so, by how much? This meta-analysis aimed to answer these questions.

Causally or corollary? An innovatively random approach to the TMAO question

Some research has supported the idea that trimethylamine N-oxide (TMAO, a metabolite of compounds found in animal products) is as scary as it sounds. But that research was mostly observational. This study investigated whether TMAO's link to metabolic disease is causal.

INTERVIEW:

Lisa Lewis, EdD, CADAC-II



Hi! Can you tell our audience a little bit about yourself and who you work with?

Sure! I'm a licensed psychologist and a certified addictions counselor, and I've been working as a psychotherapist since 2003. My master's degree is in clinical counseling, which allowed me to work in different clinical settings, with clients who had all kinds of mental health concerns. My doctoral degree is in counseling psychology, with a specialization in sport psychology, and this has allowed me to work with college and graduate students, athletes, and all kinds of high-achievers, who don't necessarily have trouble with mental illness, but who want to improve themselves, to get from "good" to "great"; who want to push themselves either professionally or personally. I've had the opportunity to work with the entire spectrum of illness to wellness. I currently have a private practice, and see folks all along this spectrum, from clients with bipolar disorder who seek regular psychotherapy, to executive clients who seek performance enhancement and mental skills coaching. I also teach at Northeastern University, and write, speak, and get involved however I can in the fitness community!

You're a Certified Alcohol and Drug Addiction Counselor. While "addiction" is a term sometimes reserved for substances, the concept of a "behavioral addiction" [has been around](#) for several decades. Are behavioral addictions a problem in the fitness-focused and athletic populations you work with? If so, what kinds have you encountered, and what should our audience know about them?

Addiction is common in the general population, and the fitness community is no exception. A recent study published in 2011 found that when assessing for all kinds of addictive behaviors, like drugs and alcohol, but also exercise and eating, 47% of the population [reported](#) some kind of addictive behavior in one year! So addiction is legitimately common.

In my experience, maladaptive exercise addiction is the exception, not the rule. What I mean by that is, I've often worked with folks who are recovering from very risky, harmful addictions, like opiates, alcohol, or pornography, and getting regular, or even lots of exercise is very helpful to the recovery process. We talk about exercise as being a "substitute behavior" or a "replacement" for the drug or behavior of choice that the individual is trying to stop. So for many recovering addicts, lots of exercise, or relying on exercise as psychological coping, is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, clients and I have often talked about their spinning or bootcamp "addiction", but in fact the behaviors are adaptive; they increase self-efficacy and self-esteem, and they support recovery.

That being said, maladaptive, or harmful, exercise addiction is real, and this can often accompany a problem with binge eating or food restriction. I find that individuals who tend to be perfectionistic and negative in their thinking are vulnerable to addictive behaviors with food and exercise. This is the type of perfectionist who feels their performance or appearance is never “good enough”, who is constantly criticizing themselves and does not see themselves or their performance clearly. With these folks, watch out for signs of overtraining, and be clear and direct when you address it. This is well within the scope of fitness professionals, because as we all know, overtraining gets in the way of all fitness goals, whether those are fat loss, hypertrophy, athletic performance, or overall health and wellness.

You also have a background in sport and exercise psychology. What are some practical takeaways from the field that you wish every athlete knew?

Sport and exercise psych 101 is that mental effort and physical effort are both important, and once you have a foundation of skill, strength, and competency in a sport or physical activity, mental effort and mental toughness is what most improves performance and enjoyment. In other words, your psychology is vital to your athletic life!

Sport and exercise psych 201 is that sport and exercise are medicinal, corrective, and transformative - psychologically. Use sport and exercise to treat and manage depression, anxiety, and stress. Use sport and exercise to work through a major loss, life change, or failure. Use sport and exercise for personal growth, introspection, and self-esteem building.

You're working on a continuing education course for trainers called "Psych Skills for Fit Pros". Can you tell us more about the course?

I would love to! Based on feedback I've received from articles I've written, podcasts and appeared on, and workshops and speaking engagements I've presented at, I have created a psychology curriculum for fitness professionals. People always ask me what to read, what else to listen to, and how to learn more about psychological applications for strength training, nutrition, and helping people grow and change in fitness. I started to realize that I could put together theory, research, and literature from the field of psychology, and present it to fitness pros in an applied, easy-to-digest format.

I'm currently completing Volume I of *Psych Skills for Fit Pros*, which addresses Motivation, Stages of Change, and Motivational Interviewing. The course will be available online, and includes lectures, psychological skills, and interviews with fitness professionals who are highly skilled in one of the content areas. I'm extremely excited about it! Launch is scheduled for January 2020.

In the course, you'll be covering a technique known as motivational interviewing. This technique has been shown to help people change their behaviors in a wide range of circumstances, including increasing [physical activity](#) and weight loss. What's motivational interviewing, why do you suggest using it, and how well does it work compared to other ways of trying to change behaviors?

Motivational interviewing (MI) is a client-centered style of communication designed to help the client

change. MI is a collaborative style of communication between the client and their guide (the guide being a fitness professional, in this case!). MI is extremely effective, because it operates on the premise that the client has all the motivation and knowledge they need to change. In this model, the coach is helping to unpack values, identify goals, troubleshoot techniques and skills, and most importantly, to support and cheer on the client! I have used this approach with drug and alcohol recovery, eating disorders, depression, anxiety, bipolar and other mental health disorders, athletes, executives, and fitness professionals. It is effective across the spectrum of people and problems, and you don't need a degree - just some basic communication skills, and solid listening skills.

Anything else you'd like to let us know?

Ooo! Well, I'd love the readers out there to follow me @drlewisconsulting, where I'm trying to put out regular content on performance enhancement, motivation, and mental toughness. I'd also love to hear what other topics fitness folks would like to know more about! Also, I do provide consultations to fitness professionals all over the world. Some fitness professionals meet with me to discuss psychological aspects of working with their clients - things like negative thinking, clients who are "non-compliant" or just "bad" at being clients, and other parts of the work that are psychologically tricky or draining. Other fitness professionals seek consultation to discuss professional development, how to refer their clients to mental health services, and other topics related to mental health.

Aside from services and products, if anyone reading wants to read articles I've written or listen to a podcast I've been on, they should visit my website: drlewisconsulting.com and go to the Media page. Thank you! ♦

[Dr. Lisa Lewis](#) is a licensed psychologist with a passion for strength training and fitness. She earned her doctorate in Counseling Psychology with a specialization in Sport Psychology at Boston University, and her doctoral research focused on exercise motivation. Lisa is also a Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor (CADAC-II), and teaches psychology courses at Northeastern University. Lisa has worked in college mental health, community mental health, inpatient psychiatric and substance abuse treatment centers over the course of her career, which began in 2003. She currently provides psychotherapy and consultation services at her private practice in Brookline, MA, and online.

Lisa works with a general population, and specializes in working with athletes and athletically-minded clients who come to her practice in hopes of achieving a personal goal or enhancing motivation to pursue goals. She also provides workshops and consultations for personal trainers and strength coaches, both for their own professional development, and to enhance their communication and motivational skills with their clientele.