

A New Spin on Fitness

by Jill Robinson
Mastery Teacher & ITP Chicago Group Leader

When defining Integral Fitness within the nine commitments of ITP, the focus has generally been on the physical body. It is recommended that practitioners engage in at least three hours of aerobic exercise each week, incorporate additional strength training and enjoy deep stretching with an emphasis on our emotional, intellectual and spiritual awareness in every movement.

In our practice, exercise and movement are not a means to an end of finally fitting into a certain size of jeans or maintaining a specific mile pace. Integral fitness is being present to the joys of being alive.

During *Catching Fire*, ITPI's conference held in May, embodying this concept of integral fitness was an important component to the weekend. What a gift to be able to lead the Kata and a mindful walk in the beautiful surroundings of the Earthrise Conference Center, connecting to nature with mind, body, heart and soul. While we definitely exercised our physical bodies exploring the trails winding throughout Earthrise or engaging in the Kata each morning, our mental fitness was also activated during the inspiring talks throughout the weekend. We were also able to lovingly stretch our emotional centers for an integral experience during the workshop with Rachel Hamilton.



Engaging our entire being in play, community and laughter during Rachel's Improv session is a favorite memory of mine from the conference. What better way to stay fit than moving our bodies and belly laughing, all while stretching our heart and souls in deep connection to such a special community? Now *that* is a fitness program I could get on board with every day!

As George Leonard says in *The Life We Are Given*, "we prefer to view vigorous physical movement not as a mechanical process that yields so many benefits for so much effort expended, but rather as a fundamental expression of our embodiment, essential to our practice precisely because it is valuable for its own sake."

Integral Fitness, however, can also have a broader definition within the practice. This important commitment is not just an integral process of being in good physical condition. Being integrally fit can also be defined as the process of creating a practice that integrates our mind, body, heart and soul, which ultimately leads to a balanced, vital and healthy state of being.

In *The Life We are Given*, there is a quote by George Leonard that describes the importance of honoring not just our physical bodies, but the broader definition of integral fitness. “*..the real juice of life is to be found not nearly so much in the products of our efforts as in the process of living itself, in how it feels to be alive.*”

Integral fitness is both an honoring of our incredible bodies, our capacity for resilience, growth, strength and flexibility, as well as an embodiment of what it means to feel balanced, vital and healthy in our entire being. “To move is to be alive” and when we are able to show up in the world balanced, healthy and fit, the possibilities for transformation are endless.

