

## A Personal Reflection on Commitment 4

By Barry Robbins, ITPI Vice President and ITP Teacher

*I accomplish at least three hours of aerobic exercise every week in increments of no less than 20 minutes. Three sessions of strength training a week are also recommended, but there is no commitment on this.*

### Overview

Aerobic exercise and strength training are two-thirds of the integral approach to physical fitness, the third being the ITP kata or some form of stretching. These three components represent the golden triangle of Western sports physiology, and combined together, they produce remarkable effects. By engaging in this form of integral fitness, or cross-training, body and soul become elevated.

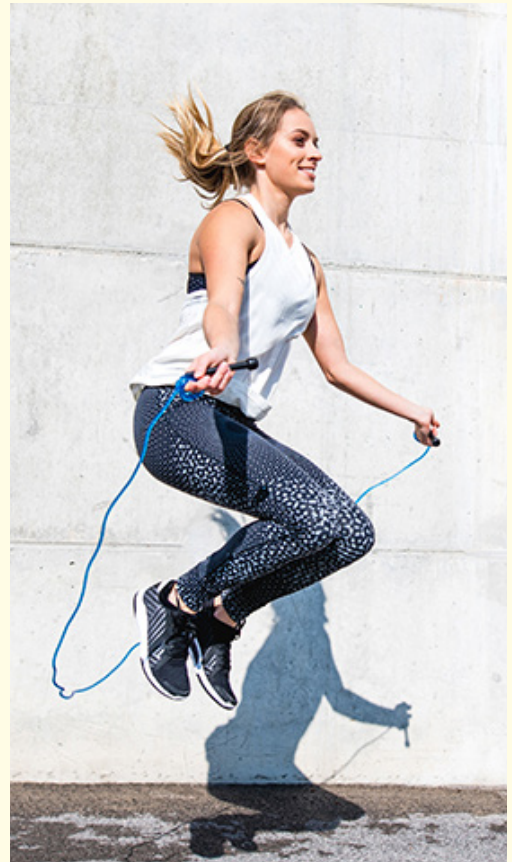
### Aerobic Exercise

I am interested in a sustained level of aerobic exercise, which consists of 5 days of fairly strenuous mountain biking per week. The effects are similar to a runner's high in which I hit my second wind shortly after starting. At that point, the movement becomes effortless, time recedes, and the experience for me is rather euphoric. I also do some of my best thinking during that time, which underscores the link between aerobic exercise and cognitive development.

Integral fitness can be described by the Greek term as "antakolouthia," meaning "the mutual entailment of the virtues." Simply stated, development in one area impacts development in other areas. Elevated states of physical activity produce elevated states of mental, emotional and spiritual activity. These activities are my adaptation of the practice of "Mitsogi", a Japanese Shinto purification ritual which is achieved by cold water immersion into sacred waterfalls, lakes or rivers. My immersion into Mitsogi through physical activity cleanses the body and mind and creates a powerful sense of purity.

My challenges with aerobic practice are two-fold:

The first is to exercise when I am either mentally or physically tired, when I don't feel like working out. During this critical time, when I could either cave or move forward, I practice the concept that discipline is freedom, and not bow to the whims of my monkey mind. I also have a somatic memory



about how I will feel after completion. A second challenge is to sustain the frequency of exercise and also increase my aerobic capacity, which is met through a focus on affirmations, flow and creating a practice program.

## **Strength Training**

Strength training is also multi-disciplinary as there is a tie-in with emotional well-being. George Leonard was fond of saying that the older we get, the more important strength training becomes as an offset to muscle laxity, weakening and osteoporosis. Of all of the types of physical exercises I engage in, strength training has the longest sustained afterglow.

As a former All-American athlete, I didn't think I needed strength training. When I joined ITP, I decided to go all-in, and take up weight-lifting and training as part of the commitments. In discovering the joy in this practice, I laughed at my own homeostatic, procrastinating nature and now savor the time spent on muscle tone and fitness. My challenge was finding the time and right conditions. I took a corner of my garage and purchased a multiple-weight bar, and now simply walk into the garage and give myself a treat. I also remember that we are what we practice, or what we don't practice. This is a cornerstone of my exercise routine that has served me well.

## **Conclusion**

In looking at the 9 Commitments, they offer a form to create a customized personal practice for our everyday lives. It provides a conscious approach to identifying our intentions and values and realizing our dreams. In combination, a transformation of consciousness can occur. The synthesis of our practices can have the effect of releasing powerful hormonal cocktails, acting as natural entheogens\* that can take us to places of transcendence, revelation and unity. This sweet spot, one of the Holy Grails of integral practice, comes free of charge. Enjoy your practice!

\*From the Greek word entheos means At the god (divine) within@ and refers to ecstatic possession. An entheogen is a psychoactive substance used in a religious, shamanic, or spiritual context.