

How Is Your Physical and Spiritual Intensity?

After my first go at a “high-intensity” CrossFit workout three years ago, I thought to myself, I have no idea how I survived that. I thought my body would fail.

After I suddenly lost my dad on a beautiful August evening five years ago, I thought to myself, “*I have no idea how I survived that.*” I thought my *spirit* would fail.

We’ve all been through intense situations and lived to tell about them. The question I have for you in this article is:

How would you react if an intense situation presented itself to you today?

“Intensity” is defined as “extreme strength, force, energy or feeling; the degree or amount of strength or force that something has.”

When we call a roller coaster “intense,” we’re referring to its scream-eliciting speed, the bone-rattling force of its twists and turns and sudden stops, and its heart-pounding vertical drops. We often step off of the ride, waddle a few steps, and say with stammering lips, “Well, I survived ...”

When a film critic speaks of an actor’s *intensity*, he’s likely referring to the actor’s ability to powerfully convey heavy emotions, such as anger, outrage, melancholy and determination. In the first example, intensity is felt bodily; in the second, it’s experienced emotionally or spiritually. (Of course, emotions can indeed cause physical symptoms, such as sweating, fatigue, appetite loss, etc.) But both can accurately be described as “intense.”

Returning to the question I posed to you above, intense

situations are unavoidable. They're part of life, part of the curse of this earth until Jesus comes again to wipe away every tear and restore all things. There are a myriad of ways to respond to crises and tragedies, from letting yourself become a veritable ball of paralyzed, self-pitying mush, to turning inward, closing yourself off and barricading your heart for fear of feeling it break again. But as unnerving, sad, destructive and devastating as intense experiences can be, each one possesses a unique and extraordinary beauty, hidden like diamonds formed in a meteorite's crater.

Unfortunately, too many of us don't take the time to dig for the diamonds; we're too busy checking our vitals, dusting ourselves off and moving as far away from the impact site as possible. So the diamonds lie undiscovered ... their brilliance never beheld. I'm so glad I didn't give up on CrossFit after I thought its intensity might make me keel over. And I'm grateful I looked to the Lord to help me find diamonds after I lost one of my dearest treasures, my father.

There are dozens, perhaps hundreds of ways to exercise, from aerobics to Zumba—even boot throwing, which turns out to be quite a popular sport in Finland, according to a trivia game I played recently. But lately, mounting research is showing that the ideal form of exercise is something known as “.”—“high intensity interval training.”

A . workout alternates between intense bursts of activity and fixed periods of less-intense activity, or even complete rest. An example is sprinting for one minute and then jogging or walking for two minutes. Repeat that three-minute interval five times for a very efficient, highly effective 15-minute workout.

The benefits—we'll call them “diamonds”—of . training are many:

- Little to no equipment required

- Short duration
- Provides health benefits you simply cannot get from regular aerobics, such as a tremendous boost in human growth hormone (HGH), aka the “fitness hormone”
- Leads to significant reductions in total abdominal, trunk and visceral fat, but also can give you significant increases in fat-free mass and aerobic power
- Improves cardiovascular endurance
- Promotes weight loss without muscle loss
- Boosts metabolism thanks to the increased production of HGH

High-intensity exercise, like CrossFit, is tough. But like you read above, *the rewards make it more than worth it*. The same goes for the “spiritual intensity” that crashes into our lives like a fireball from out of the blue. See what God has to say about the beauty of pain this side of Heaven:

“Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don’t try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work *so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way*” (James 1:2-4, MSG, emphasis mine).

“Pure gold put in the fire comes out of it proved pure; genuine faith put through this suffering comes out proved genuine. When Jesus wraps this all up, it’s your faith, not your gold, that God will have on display as evidence of his victory” (1 Peter 1:7, MSG).

Whatever you’re going through, be it a long, arduous run, a grueling sweat session at the gym, or a family crisis or job predicament that’s brought you to your knees, I urge you to dig for the diamonds. I encourage you to let the Bright and Morning Star illuminate them for you. I challenge you to walk away from the rubble stronger and more radiant than ever ... to see—to *become*—the beauty of intensity.

Stay fit, stay faithful.

Diana Anderson-Tyler is the author of Creation House's Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness and her latest book, Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness. Her popular website can be found at , and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925. Diana can be reached on Twitter.

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