



Full Potential
Physical Therapy

Health & Fitness
NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2021



THE ART OF ACTION

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THE ART OF ACTION

There are many of you out there, like myself, where you can feel the years weighing in on your body and the ability to do what you like to do or what actually continues to need to be done to handle your world. I was reminded of this recently as I dreaded the one day out of the year where I trim the hedges and bushes in my yard. The hedges are wide and tall and reaching with outstretched arms holding a 15-20 lb. gas trimmer (see photo) can catch up with you quite quickly. So, for myself I was reminded of what I teach my patients many times over about the Art of Action when doing strenuous activities.

I often tell the story to my patients of the baseball pitcher who at 38 is pitching far differently than he/she did at 20 years old. Smarter and more wily in their older years, they win through the art of their craft versus being a power pitcher and the amazing news



is they are still playing the game they love because they have been able to adapt as their body and abilities have changed.

We all have games and activities we derive great joy or satisfaction in being able to continue to do, but as the years add up, we are left with more questions about our ability and the consequences of over straining or injury. There are two ideas here when it comes to continuing to engage in your life's challenges. 1. Do you do anything to help keep your body mobile and strong and (2) are you smart about how you approach those demanding activities? Notice how smart and art rhyme because there is a relationship between these two words. Knowing how to stretch can be a great

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THE ART OF ACTION

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asset and being smart about the art of action is about how to navigate through activities one does without creating physical problems.

Often what I hear from my patients is related to yard work of some sort and how this can put their body into a bit of an uproar. I tell them when their PT has concluded and they are feeling better that practicing the Art of Action when working can be one of the better ways to avoid seeing me or another PT again. Like the pitcher who is still pitching, we all want to continue to play the games we enjoy or jobs that are gratifying. There is a good bit of joy and pleasure looking at a freshly manicured yard, a garden weeded well, or beautifully cleaned set of windows but often we pay a price for our overzealousness to get it all done today.

In the Art of Action, we have a mindset that blends the accomplishment of a job well done with the goal of still feeling good that evening or the next day. Both have equal value as opposed to sacrificing the body for the beautiful yard, the clean house or car. Inherent in the "Art" is pacing yourself and knowing when to take breaks. Much of what you or I are dealing with as we push to finish the hedge or lawn, is fatigue. No, it's not the huff and puff fatigue associated with jogging a few blocks but isolated muscle fatigue associated with concentrated over work on a specific area of the body. For me, it was my shoulders and neck with holding that heavy hedge trimmer. Those areas obviously were not used to it and so muscles can rebel. This is the type of fatigue we are discussing, tight over contracted muscle fatigue. It is interesting that one of the more frequent reasons people end up in PT is from muscles that are stuck tight causing joint and soft tissue pain. Those muscle groups just never released. How to avoid such a situation is putting the Art of Action into motion.

Handling this type of fatigue can occur with simple actions. One action is just timing; it is knowing when to take a break, get some water and move your body

in the opposite direction it has been working. With hedge trimming, I extended or straightened my fingers, wrists, elbows and shoulders to reverse the strain on the hardest working areas. I stopped when I felt tired and did a different activity like raking up the trimmings, so the tired muscles got a break. I went and got the recycled waste container, did some walking and so, I remained productive by dividing the job up. Some trimming, then raking and cleanup which changed the demand on the hardest working muscles.

It is muscle that generates performance and when it gets over contracted or short, performance is going to decline which can eventually set up joint stress and potential inflammation. Taking breaks, doing alternative activities, and if you knew some simple stretches, doing those can make a notable difference

in how you will feel later. Often the toughest part is just being able to stop yourself.

Now, doing simple stretches is no small suggestion. Ignorance is not your friend when it comes to your body. Knowing how to stretch correctly when it comes to avoiding overuse problems of your

musculoskeletal system is a huge asset in the Art of Action concept. If you have some interest in what I am referring then check my Blog on our website for instructions and pictures to provide general guidance for back and upper body stretches. And, if you really wanted to do it right setting up a PT appointment and learning what would be the right stretches for you based on an examination. That would be as simple as a phone call to Full Potential.

And, let's not forget the simple idea of leaving something for tomorrow to do. If time is not beating a fast drum in your life, pace a job over a few days or a week. Blend in other enjoyments or activities and let go of the compulsive tendency to want it done today. Remember, your parallel goal – to not sacrifice your body for the sake of finishing a job.

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Quote of the Month

"If you are lucky enough to find a way of life you love, you have to find the courage to live it."

-John Irving

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**Thanks A Bunch,
The Full Potential Staff**



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LIFE IN RETIREMENT AFTER 47 YEARS IN PHYSICAL THERAPY

JACK VANDEN BERG, PT

I received an email from Vince asking me if I would like to write something for the Full Potential newsletter on the process of switching gears from working to retirement. I quickly took him up on it, because I thought this would be a fun activity to look back on the retirement process and how it affected my life. It turned out to be much harder than I expected, because after 16 months I think I am just now starting the process. Let me explain.

I planned on retiring July 31, 2021 (yes the end of this month). However, that was not to be. March 8, 2020 we left for a 10 day vacation in Florida. Our daughter and family met us there. You will remember that is when we were just hearing about COVID as a global problem. When we got to the resort it was full. They did put in some precautions, but not many. As the week progressed Covid-19 dominated the news and people started to leave. The gut punch was when we walked out of our condo on our last day and realized that we were the only car in the parking area. Everyone was gone. We rented a car for our kids and drove back to Michigan in an unreal world. By the time we got home Michigan was in lockdown. I was on unemployment for a few weeks and then worked on projects and continuing education studies. Slowly people were called back to work. Due to my age and underlying asthma, as well as younger staff with children and families, I decided that maybe this was the best time for me to retire. After all, it was only 1 year early!

One of my greatest regrets was that I never got to say goodbye to my patients or to the staff in a meaningful way. Some of my other regrets are not being able to plan my retirement process or that first retirement getaway. It has been such a loss not being able to use the physical therapy / medical side of my brain to figure out the source of the problem, and then to help people design a plan to reach their physical health goals. I miss the structure and routine of working, and knowing that every day you have done something of value.

What have I enjoyed: NO paperwork, getting to sleep past 5:30 AM, reading more, getting projects done that have been waiting

years, volunteering at the Grand Rapids Public Museum, finishing writing my career story, and just knowing I don't have to finish this today because I can do it tomorrow.

I think the hardest part of this journey has been making sure I do something of value each day. Covid-19 has been a huge part of my early retirement process. In many ways I do not feel I have actually been retired yet because so many of our dreams have been put on hold and filled with other responsibilities. For example, we took on virtual schooling for our 8 year old granddaughter for the 2020-2021 school year. It was such a joy to watch her brain work, but so heartbreaking to have her say "I don't want you to be my teacher, I just want you to be my Paw!"

Also, the isolation certainly did not fit what I expected retirement to be. We began to keep contact by setting up Zoom or FaceTime every night with friends across the country. We reawakened old friendships which was wonderful. We certainly cooked more at home, cancelled vacations, created a very small bubble of family members, and waited!!!! Waited for the vaccine to become available.

We finally were able to schedule our vaccination appointments. It was such a sense of relief to have protection and the security of solid medical science to trust. Our bubble of friends that were vaccinated grew, and we were able to start face to face visits and dinners. We started to travel carefully by driving not flying yet. We actually took out our travel trailer for the first time since 2019.

I think I'm starting retirement now! I'll have to reflect on retirement again in a few months. Thank you to the staff for your talents and incredible dedication to serving all your patients. Thank you to all my past patients for everything you have taught me, and for all the hard work you put into making your physical therapy treatment a success. Without your participation success would be limited, and I know the career would not have been nearly as much fun! Finally, thank you to Vince Hanneken and Full Potential for giving me the opportunity to finish my career at a service and people committed clinic.

Foot and ankle pain won't go away? ! Call us at 616-392-2172 to book your appointment today!

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That being said, if you do overdo remember our last month's newsletter where I wrote an article on the use of ice to help calm an overworked muscle. Some people reach for the Advil but from a physiological perspective, ice would serve them better to calm a tired, overly short muscle. This is often how ice is used in athletics. That 38-year-old pitcher made friends with ice long ago and that is one reason he/she is still out there doing what they love. Keep a couple of good ice packs in the freezer, ready to go when needed. Timely icing changes the direction of muscle recovery to work in your favor and enhances and accelerates your body's natural recovery process. Seems too simple but ice has survived the test of time and all the high-tech advancements in athletics to still be the go-to modality for tired, tight overworked muscles.

So, to sum up, in the Art of Action we have a mindset about the balance between getting the job done and the idea of respecting your body as much as the things you own. The action of this is pacing, taking breaks, doing related actions to remain productive but change the muscle strain pattern, stretches (see Blog), and treating your body like an athlete and use ice to help muscle recovery.

You have to start with the mindset first or you will not succeed very well. Your attitude about the activity is key and respecting your body as much or more than the job your doing will serve you well as life adds more years to your body. We can keep ourselves on the playing fields we enjoy if we get wily smart like the older pitcher.

If you feel like you're losing the battle of body v. activity and your Art needs more smart to succeed, get a referral to Full Potential. We can get you back in your game much quicker than waiting and guessing on what to do, plus teach you how to help yourself. The internet is great but it cannot look at you as a person in pain and figure the strategy to succeed. The best investment of your resources usually starts with yourself, a capable you can be an asset to everyone. Call today for a pain free tomorrow.

EXERCISE ESSENTIALS



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Standing Calf Stretch

Using a chair for support, execute by standing with one foot in front. Slowly lean forward. You should feel a stretch in your back calf. Keep your back knee locked and hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat 3 times per leg.

PATIENT SUCCESS STORY

I've been coming to Full Potential on and off for several years following a back injury/surgery. The stretches and exercises I've learned have allowed me to live pain free. I have "check ups" with my therapist a few times throughout the year to keep me on track. Recently I got away from doing my exercises for quite awhile and found myself in pain, to the point that I thought there might not be a return to "normal." It's embarrassing when you know what you need to do but don't do it! Nonetheless, I called and confessed and got back into regular visits for a few weeks. I am happy to be back to pain free!! There was no judgement or "scolding." The staff is phenomenal and truly want to see you succeed, regardless of what brings you in! Their knowledge and expertise are second to none and the environment is friendly, not intimidating at all. I'm so thankful for Full Potential and would encourage anyone to check it out!

-Susan J.