

Friendly Competition – this is your new secret weapon as it typically enhances effort automatically and adds an enjoyable element to physical activity. Some people like to compete to win *against* others while others derive enjoyment from competing *with* others. For the latter group, competition is more about collaboration than domination.

Competition positively influences exercise intensity and leads to greater performance, *even in people who identify as non-competitive*. Groups of people were tested in competitive and non-competitive situations and in general all individuals – regardless of competitive preference – performed better. (Ives, 2020)

Uncertainty signals the brain that you're unsure of your environment, your skills, and this optimizes learning, attention, and focus. (Massi, 2018) Unpredictable, uncertain situations might be uncomfortable, but they're also essential if you want to make the most of your brain. Too much stability and predictability is a shut off signal for your brain.

Consider the too familiar scene of two people on adjacent weight machines in a gym, mindlessly going through the motions of the exercise while chatting over the details of a television show or current events in their lives.

Physical activity is good – adding these elements simultaneously makes it better as they heighten physical effort and mental engagement. Combined cognitive and physical challenge is superior to either done alone or if they are done concurrently (i.e., one after the other with no overlap) (Gheysen, 2018) Combining them allows us to optimize the brain benefits of physical activity.

In case you have people who “don't like competition.”

Competition gets a bad reputation. Mostly this comes from people who are too competitive and take a fun game too seriously in trying to win. But this only tells half the story of competition. While some enjoy competition *against* the other team, many other people enjoy competing *with* their teammates.

For the latter type of person, the value in competing comes from the sense of belonging to a team and competing together with teammates. This duality of competition is often overlooked.

Using the right amount of competition works a kind of magic: it creates a subjectively elevated emotional experience while creating an objectively harder effort – and one that is nearly effortless on the part of the professional.

On the individual level, there is also an internal self-competition manifesting as a drive to perform well for self-efficacy.

Higher Intensity Made Easy(er)

Once there is competition, you rarely must ask people to work harder. It happens automatically. The nature of competition generates a self-selected intensity that is chosen from a desire to do well in that competition – either to win or to do your best for your teammates depending on the person's competition style. This typically results in the participant working harder without requiring a push or encouragement to.

Exercise Examples & Workout

Rubber Chicken Foot Toss – using one or two feet, partners toss a rubber chicken (or any suitable object) to each other, catching with their hands. Count the successful catches. If using this in a one-on-one setting, simply try to beat the score on your previous set. The sudden level of competitiveness you often see on display in this exercise is fascinating.

- Competitive options for small group workouts. See which pair of partners has the highest:

- Number of consecutive catches without a drop
- Number of total catches in a single set
- Number of total catches of all sets summed together

Plank High-5 Shuffle: One partner performs a plank; reaching out to one side. Other partner low-5s, then shuffles around to the other side while partner one switches arms

High-Ten Squat – face each other; one partner reaches overhead while other partner squats & floor tap, switch continuously and high-10 on the way up/down

Offense-Defense Drill

3-Point Burpee – P1 & P2 perform a burpee. P1 calls out L/R Arm or Leg (1 of these 4 options) and each “eliminates” that limb from the push-up position on the burpee.

V-Sit Side-to-Side Leg Hurdles – one person goes high; the other goes low

AVAILABLE NOW: **Alzheimer’s Fitness Specialist Course:** www.Funtensity.com/AlzFitCourse. Go deeper on the concepts presented today to find out what you can do to optimize the use of exercise to help prevent and slow the progression of Alzheimer’s Disease – now the 6th leading cause of death in the US. We have bodies that outlive our brains and it’s time we started protecting our brains too.

The course includes:

- Over 11 hours of video
- Nearly 100 exercise videos
- 200+ page manual with expanded information
- Interviews from people whose loved ones died from and are living with the disease as well as people who have used strategies from the course to avoid it.

The course is approved to provide continuing education credits from various education organizations (e.g., ACE, canfitpro, ISSA, NASM, AFAA).

References & Resources

- Get the **gear** that is useful for this type exercise: Funtensity.com/equipment/
- Gheysen, F., Poppe, L., DeSmet, A. et al. (2018) Physical activity to improve cognition in older adults: can physical activity programs enriched with cognitive challenges enhance the effects? A systematic review and meta-analysis. Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act 15, 63. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-018-0697-x>
- Ives, J.C., et al. (2020) The Effects of Competitive Orientation on Performance in Competition. The Sport Journal. <https://thesportjournal.org/article/the-effects-of-competitive-orientation-on-performance-in-competition/>
- Massi, B., et al. (2018) Volatility Facilitates Value Updating in the Prefrontal Cortex. Neuron. 99(3):P598-608.E4 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2018.06.033>

Presenter Contact:

Jonathan Ross, AionFitness.com, Funtensity.com

Hashtags #Funtensity, #FuntensityChicken

The Funtensity Chicken: Funtensity.com/the-rubber-chicken/

Videos: Aionfitness.com/video-downloads/

Funtensity Workout Video: Funtensity.com/joinus

Abs Revealed Book: AionFitness.com/abs-revealed/

Twitter/Facebook/Instagram/LinkedIn: **@JonathanRossFit** and **@Funtensity**

YouTube Channels: Funtensity, (Funtensity-focused) JonathanRossFit (all things fitness)

Facebook Professional Pages: “**Funtensity**” and “**Abs Revealed**”

E-newsletter sign-up at Funtensity.com