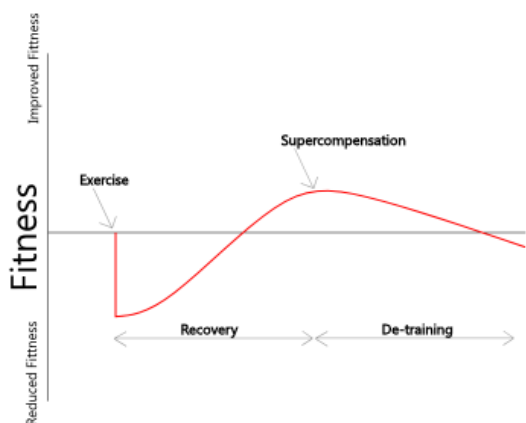


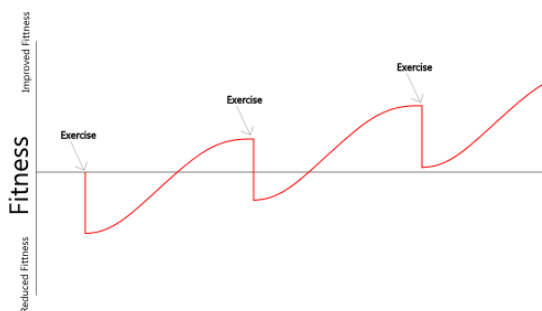
# Running: It Does Not Make You Fit!

We all know that exercise is crucial for improving fitness, but it's only part of the equation. While exercise provides the necessary stimulus, it's the rest period following exercise that allows you to become fitter. During this rest period, the damage caused by exercise is repaired, and the body adapts, making you stronger and fitter for the next session. This process is known as supercompensation and is how we progress from running a 10K to a marathon or improving our 5K time.

The diagram below illustrates how supercompensation works in a single bout of exercise. You can see that exercise initially causes damage to the body, but with the appropriate rest period, the body adapts and becomes stronger than before. However, the benefits of supercompensation will tail off if there's no further stimulus.

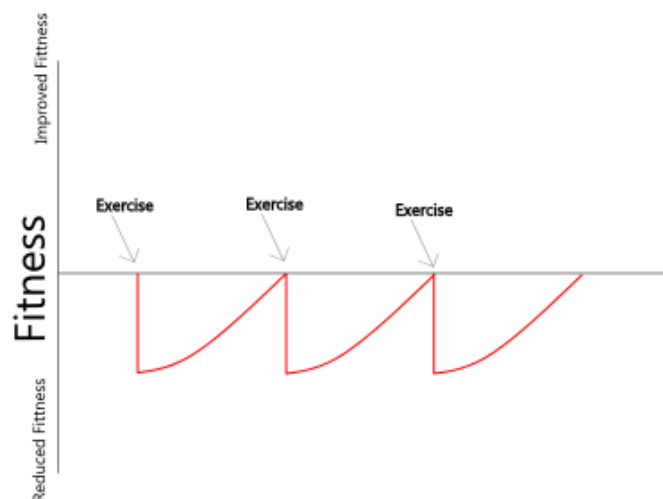


To achieve continuous fitness improvement, the next bout of exercise should occur at the peak of supercompensation, as shown in the diagram below.



If there's no improvement in fitness despite continuous stimulus, it could be due to inadequate recovery periods

between each session, leading to stagnation, as illustrated in the diagram.



Overtraining, or under-recovery, can even lead to a decrease in fitness levels. In response to this, some may increase their training, but this only exacerbates the problem and increases the risk of injury, as shown in the diagram below.



Each type of training intensity, such as distance, speed, or frequency, requires its own length of recovery. For instance, endurance runs need much more recovery time than short fartlek sessions, and recovery after a hard race may need to be longer than usual. Other factors such as mental stress, age, nutrition, and sleep also affect recovery, so it's essential to listen to your body and find your ideal recovery period.

Rest is where the 'magic' happens, so it must be given the respect it deserves.

The take-home message - rest *is* training.

Iain Denby