Chapter Objectives

• Help you appreciate physical activity as a signature of humanity.

• Help you appreciate the ways in which experience can expand the human potential for physical activity.

• Help you develop insight into the factors that influence people’s perceptions of physical activity and decisions to engage in it.

• Preview kinesiology concepts that should be considered when prescribing physical activity experiences.

(continued)
• Describe the importance of subjective experience of physical activity and spectatorship of physical activity.

• Explain factors that influence our personal experiences of physical activity.

• Discuss how individual preferences, tastes, dispositions, activity histories, and personal circumstances contribute to our subjective experiences of physical activity.
Physical Activity Experience

• Defined as training in, observation of, practice of, or participation in physical activity to increase one’s capacity for physical performance.

• Differentiated from *subjective* physical activity experiences (reactions, feelings, and thoughts).

• Kinesiologists are experts at designing and manipulating physical activity experiences to bring about desired ends, such as improvement in skill, performance, health, and well-being.
Physical Activity as a Signature of Humanity

• We are different from animals, in part, because of our extraordinary capacity to translate complex mental concepts into precise and creative physical actions.

• Physical activity
  • Rooted in intricate, intelligent plans
  • Used to express aesthetic imagination and moral reasoning
  • Flexible and adaptable
  • Improved performance through planned experience (training and practice)
Factors That Influence Kinds of Experience in Physical Activity

• A paradox: Why do most of us fail to explore to its fullest potential something so fundamental to our human nature and so beneficial to us? In contrast, why do some people engage in physical activity throughout their lives?
  • Social environment
  • Personal circumstances
Figure 3.1

Personal circumstances
- Geography
- Local physical activity culture
- Economic considerations
- Personal attributes

Social environment
- Parents
- Peers
- Teachers or coaches

Quality and quantity of physical activity experiences
Ways in Which Experience Can Affect Physical Activity

• Before learning specific terminology, research, and theories in specialized areas, look at physical activity experience in broader terms.

• Two fundamental effects of physical activity experience
  1. The development of skill through practice
  2. The development of physical capacity

• All physical activity experiences contribute to both skill and physical capacity, but the particular mix of the two depends on many factors that can be modified by the performer or by a kinesiology professional.
Figure 3.3

Primary quality of activity
- Physical performance capacity
- Skill development

Type of experience emphasized
- Training
- Practice

Primary effect of improvement
- Conditioning
- Motor learning

Examples
- Jumping jack
- Sawing a board
- Blocking an opponent
- Handspring
- Basketball dribble
- Tennis serve
- Golf putt
- Video game
Learning, Practice, and Skill

• Motor skills: physical activities through which performers try to attain goals by executing efficient, coordinated motor responses.

• Practice: physical activity experience that involves cognitive processing and leads to skill improvement.

• Learning: Permanent alteration in the functioning of the nervous system that enables performers to achieve predetermined goals consistently.
Training, Conditioning, and Physical Performance Capacity

• Physical performance capacity: aspects of physical activity developed through training

• Training: physical activity carried out for the purpose of conditioning one for performance in an athletic or other event

• Conditioning: temporary end state of training reflected in the performer’s possession of adequate strength, endurance, and flexibility to carry out desired tasks
Practice Versus Training

• Practice primarily affects memory, cognition, perception, and other central nervous system processes that are associated with problem solving.

• Training primarily produces effects that are largely peripheral to the central nervous system and that usually affect muscle, bone, soft tissue, and the cardiorespiratory system.
Experience in Physical Activity and Physical Fitness

- Not just one domain of athletic ability or physical fitness
- A physically fit person
  - can perform the essential activities of daily living at a high level,
  - has sufficient energy remaining to pursue an active leisure life, and
  - can meet unexpected physical demands that emergencies may impose.

- Types of physical fitness
  - Motor performance fitness
  - Health-related fitness
Figure 3.5

Motor performance tests
- Anaerobic power
- Speed
- Agility

Health-related fitness tests
- Muscular strength
- Muscular endurance
- Flexibility
- Cardiorespiratory endurance
- Body composition

Adapted from Pate 1988.
Identifying Critical Components of Physical Activity Experiences

- Essential to a physical activity professional’s job.
- Determine skill components critical to learning.
  - Consider figure 3.3
  - Consult motor skill taxonomies.
  - Closed skills versus open skills (see figure 3.6).
- Determine practice experiences that improve skills.
- Determine experiences appropriate for training.
  - Know the critical components of the activity.
  - Ask experts.
  - Consult research.
Figure 3.6

Closed skills
- Environment predictable
- Movements consistent from trial to trial
- Coordinating movements with changing environment unnecessary
- Anticipation of external events not necessary

Open skills
- Environment unpredictable
- Movements vary from trial to trial
- Coordinating movements with changing environment essential
- Anticipation of external events essential
• Abilities as building blocks of experience
  • Abilities = genetic predispositions can offer advantages or disadvantages for particular activities.
  • Abilities offer *potential* in specific activities, but potential alone is usually insufficient for high levels of skill or performance.
  • Abilities + practice + training experiences = highest level of competence that you are able to achieve in a particular activity.
Interaction of Experience and Abilities

• Research is still in its infancy; very difficult to generalize the effect of genetics on performance.

• “There is still no evidence that any of these (genetic) variants have any substantial predictive value for prospectively identifying potential elite athletes” (MacArthur & North, 2005, p. 336).

• Limits of learning and conditioning are determined by both PA experiences and inherited abilities. We control only experience; therefore, the best strategy for achieving excellence is to seek the best physical activity experiences.
Subjective Experience of Physical Activity

• This refers to how we feel, think, and react to physical activity rather than the actual performance itself.

• Unobservable emotions are at least as important as physical experience of our favorite physical activities.

• Derived from physical activity
  • Emotions
  • Cognitions
  • Dispositions
  • Knowledge
  • Meanings
Physical Activity Experiences as Subjective and Unique

• The feelings we have when we move our bodies differ from the feelings we have when sitting or lying motionless.

• Subjective experiences in physical activity are often overlooked.

• Listen to your body.
  • “What most athletes don’t know, but philosophical athletes do know, is just how much can be learned from listening to their bodies. Listen closely enough to your body and you might discover a window to your soul” (Reid, 2002, p. 52).

• Physical activity is best when personally meaningful.
Why Subjective Experiences Are Important to Kinesiology Professionals

• They help clarify the basis of career choices.
• They help develop our skills as physical activity professionals.
• They determine whether we will make that activity part of our lives (internal dynamics rather than external performance).
The Nature of Subjective Experiences

• Immediate subjective experiences
  • “Instant” emotional and cognitive impressions: your best game, or a “bad” day.
  • Awareness and ease of recognition of these impressions improves with experience.

• Replayed subjective experiences (self-reflection)
  • Do you remember the feeling?
  • Replay the experience in your mind including visual, kinesthetic, auditory, and other impressions.
  • The potential for putting experiences into context makes subjective experiences meaningful.
Components of Subjective Experience

- Sensations and perceptions
- Emotions and emotional responses
- Knowledge and subjective experience
  - Rational knowledge
  - Intuitive knowledge
    - Psychoanalytic self-knowledge (deep-seated desires)
    - Mystical knowledge (rare and special; peak experience)
    - Socratic self-knowledge (what we know and what we don’t know)
Talking About Subjective Experiences

• Difficult to find the correct words to express our feelings.
• Important because it helps us better understand the meanings that we find in physical activity.
Factors Affecting Our Enjoyment of Physical Activity

1. Factors related to the activity
2. Factors related to the performer
3. Factors related to the social context
Factors Related to the Activity

• Balance between challenge and ability (see figure 3.8)
• Clear goals and feedback
• Competition
Factors Related to the Performer

- Dispositions: short-term, highly variable psychological states that may be affected by a host of external factors
  - Perceived competence
  - Absorption
  - Perceived control
- Attitudes: relatively stable mind-sets about things that may be favorable or unfavorable
Attitudes Toward Physical Activity

- Social experience
- Health and fitness
- Pursuit of vertigo
- Aesthetic experience
- Cathartic experience
- Ascetic experience
Factors Related to the Social Context

• Alone versus with others
• Environment
• Sense of perceived freedom
Sport and Exercise Participation: It’s About YOU

• Physical activities are never performed in a vacuum; the social context and immediate environment can affect our sense of enjoyment.

• An example of this is when we find an activity less than enjoyable because we feel forced to engage in it rather than freely choosing to do it.

• What physical activity(ies) do you most enjoy? Why? What insights have you gained by answering those questions now, after reading this chapter?
Watching Sport as a Subjective Experience

• Vicarious participation
  • Feeling as though we are engaged in a sport contest we are watching
  • Illustrated by comments such as “Our team is winning” or “Last night we lost,” even though we are not actually on the team

• Disinterested sport spectating
  • A form of watching sport contests in which we are nonpartisan in our feelings about the outcome
  • Does not always result in less enjoyment
Factors That Affect Enjoyment of Watching Sport

• Knowledge of the game: helps us appreciate the quality and significance of the performance

• Feelings toward the competing teams and players: our team versus your team

• Human drama of sport competition: bitter rivalry versus friendly competition
Wrap Up

• Physical activity involves emotions, thoughts, feelings and reactions.

• Physical activity professionals help people appreciate physical activity.

• Subjective experiences are gained by participating or watching.

• Our enjoyment of an activity is one of the greatest determinants as to whether we continue to engage in that physical activity.
Preparing for Part II

Diagram showing the relationship between physical activity experience, professional experience in physical activity, and various components of physical activity:

- Physiology of physical activity
- Philosophy of physical activity
- History of physical activity
- Scholarship of physical activity
- Biomechanics
- Sport and exercise psychology
- Motor behavior
- Sociology of physical activity