



What exactly do we mean when we talk about 'fitness'?

Hello again and welcome!

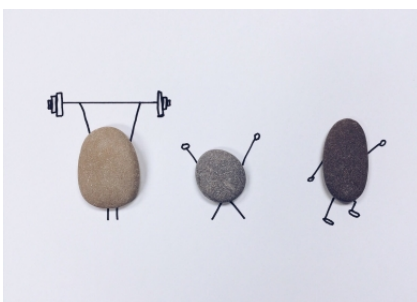
Welcome to my new subscribers...and hello again to my existing supporters. Thank you for signing up to receive my blog; I hope you find this week's content interesting and feel it was worth subscribing to.

Diana xx



Firstly apologies for the lack of posting last week; I've aimed to be pretty consistent with creating new content each week; not so much last week... sorry everyone.

However, to make up for the gap this is the first in a new mini-series of posts on 'fitness'; what we mean by it, what it entails, how we can train each element independently; and ultimately how training each one can benefit us in helping to manage our MS.



I started thinking about this post over the weekend and had planned to write a piece on training the skill-related components of fitness that I haven't already posted about (eg coordination, agility etc) and how we can train for them to help manage these aspects of mobility with our MS. If you've looked at the

pages on ['What constitutes physical fitness?'](#) on the site you may have an inkling about what's to come over the next few weeks... It felt an introductory post was in order setting out what we mean by fitness before 'deep-diving' into specific elements.

This made me think about the different aspects of wellbeing which constitute 'fitness', and got me thinking about the whole sphere of fitness outside of sport and physical activity: deemed 'Total Fitness'.

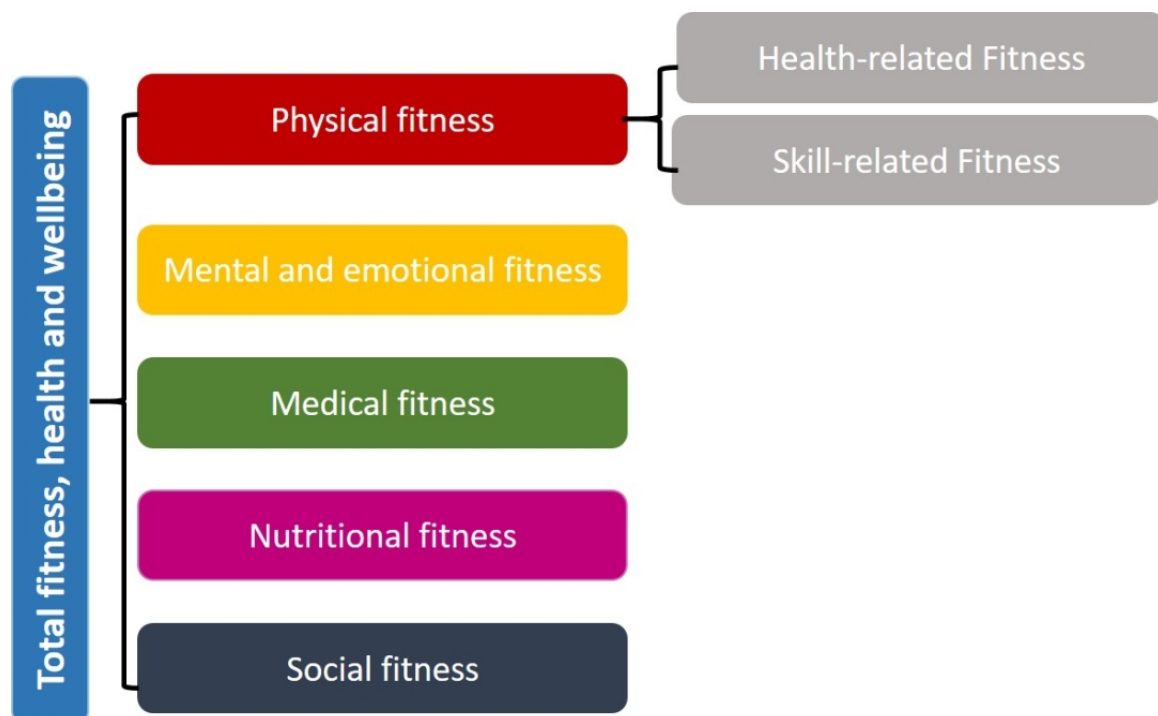
'Total Fitness' and its components

In 1948, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defined health as:

"A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"

It's good to know that we can be considered healthy despite dealing with our MS: it can be easy to forget this sometimes...

The chart below shows the elements considered to make up 'Health' as defined by the WHO and which have come to be accepted as aspects of Total Fitness. Without sounding too much like a life-coach or similar (which I'm definitely not) aside from 'medical fitness (which in the case of MS we can't do anything to cure), the other aspects detailed are modifiable so we can work to improve them. As someone who is always striving to be better (well, the BEST if we're honest!) I find this exciting.



As you can see 'Fitness' in this case isn't talking about just physical fitness so even if you find traditional fitness (exercise) challenging, you can still work to improve other aspects and continue to make fitness-related progress. OK, that did sound a bit 'life-coachy'... back to PT-ing and nutrition-advising!

Total fitness, health and wellbeing in more

detail

I'm not going to dwell too much on the aspects of physical fitness here; I've written about the importance of cardiovascular (aerobic) fitness, balance and muscular strength in previous posts (you can catch up on these [here](#) if you missed them); future posts in this mini-series will focus on the remaining elements of health and skills-related fitness as concepts.

Mental and emotional fitness

'The wellbeing of the mind'; harmony between the mind and emotions; being able to manage stress. We know that some mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety can be common in MS: there has been much talk on social media in recent weeks about the need to effectively screen for anxiety and actively treat anxiety in MS from the likes of the [Bart's](#) blog; [MS-UK](#) et al. Perhaps this needs to be a separate post, but I'm keen not to dwell on it too much here although I researched the impact of different 'whole diet' approaches of eating on depression and anxiety for my master's degree; the [MS Trust](#) and [MS Society](#) have good information on this. Your GP or MS nurse can obviously also help here.

Medical fitness

Uh huh... Not modifiable but hopefully manageable.

Nutritional fitness

There is a whole section on the site talking about the importance of a [healthy diet](#) in helping to prevent additional diseases; and current Department of Health Eatwell guidelines for the UK population. Until conclusive evidence is available for any of the 'special' diets promoted to help in MS, these population-based guidelines are recommended for everyone. If you need some specialist advice on diet, please speak with [dietitian](#) (either via your GP or MS nurse).

Social fitness

'Having healthy interactions and relationships with others'. An important aspect of mental and emotional fitness; it really does feel good to talk; it's about connecting with, and feeling supported and listened to by other people. This is something that can often go overlooked when you have a (possibly) invisible chronic illness like MS.

While the correct collective term for these components is 'total fitness' I often think of it in terms of 'whole-package fitness' which equips us to deal with whatever life throws at us. Developing each of these aspects can help us to

mentally and physically manage this disease; I'm aware that I possibly focus too much on physical fitness at the expense of say, social fitness, but each of these 'pieces' are equally important. I really do sound a bit 'life-coachy' now...

As always, the last word from me...

Do let me know if you have found this post helpful. Send me an [email](#); join me on Twitter (@healthylifems) or send me a message through the contact page on the website, I'd love to know what you think.



Diana xx

References:

Active IQ (2016) 'Principles of exercise, fitness and health' in *Fitness Instruction: (gym)*. London: Active IQ

MS Society (2017) Depression. Available online at: <https://www.mssociety.org.uk/what-is-ms/signs-and-symptoms/mental-health/depression>

MS Trust (2017) a-z of MS: Depression. Available online at: <https://www.mstrust.org.uk/a-z/depression>



Thank you for reading :)

Diana xx

✉ hello@healthylifems.com 🗨️ Tweet: @healthylifems

HealthyLife MS

hello@healthylifems.com

[Website](#)

Copyright 2017 HealthyLife MS.

All rights reserved.

TWEET

FORWARD

You received this email because you signed up to receive blog updates via our website. If you would like to stop receiving updates at any time please unsubscribe below.

[**Unsubscribe**](#)

lite