



FITNESS FORUM

You're not in a walker yet!

Picture it, a father and his teenage son posturing back and forth, exchanging stories of their respective athletic accomplishments. On one side, vivid recollections of achievements that have long since past, while on the other, candid and confident speak of victories recently had. The mood is light and the jocular nature of their conversation is amusing to those neighboring, however as one can imagine, it's simply a matter of time before things change...

"I'm serious, I was pretty quick in my day"

"Let's be real Dad, things were different in your time. Athletic equipment is so much better today than it was waaay back then."

"That maybe true, but speed is speed..."

"Seriously Dad. You have to know that I'm faster than you ever were. You never would have been able to keep up with me in a race."

And just like that, the gauntlet had been cast. In that statement, the father, a local professor with an aging, medium-athletic build realized that his son viewed him as a dinosaur; an aging relic from another time, unable to understand what it's like to be young, athletic and invincible.

Although out of line for his disparaging comments regarding his fathers past athletic abilities, is it truly any wonder that many of our children view us in the same light? How many parents have unknowingly become a statistic by gaining 2 to 3 pounds of unwanted fat each year? When it comes to the "Battle of the Bulge", many dads have simply succumbed to loosening up their belts an extra notch or two and untucking their Polo's for comfort, and many mothers have chosen to take advantage of the highly unusual yet, effective packaging characteristics of your classic "mom jeans".

I have a theory that if we change how we view our physical abilities as parents, then we can change how our children view us as well. Think about it. If our kids consistently witness us swimming, running and playing

tennis wouldn't they in turn be more likely to view us as athletic and even better yet an athlete? Just imagine the cool points that you could earn back!

According to a study on aging and athletic performance published in the Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons in January of 2000, there is an inevitable decline in performance that occurs with age, however it was also shown "that many age-related declines in musculoskeletal function can be markedly reduced by participation in some form of regular exercise".

The same study found that athletic performance peaked at around age 35 with only a 10% decline in performance per decade in sports that were aerobic, versus a 20% - 30% decline with those that were anaerobic in nature. What does that mean? Well, it means that you're not dead and at 45 you're still operating at 90% of your aerobic (80% of your strength) potential and that your body is more than capable of still getting out there and competing in a local 5k, basketball league and/or strength training program. That's a pretty good return given the present state of our economy.

As far as the father and son, that afternoon they went to a local track and raced a 100 meter dash, twice to the same result. The look on his sons face was priceless when his father beat him (although narrowly) the second time. Even more importantly, it revived the father's passion for competition and started him racing on the masters sprinting scene. His son looks at him completely differently now too, sparing (most of) the aging jokes directed at his dad.

So this year, go ahead and challenge yourself. I guarantee you'll feel great and you'll probably gain a few young admirers as well.

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