

„Our success as teachers is primarily measured against the success with which we achieve our educational purposes.“

(BREHM)

## *Fitness - a new methodological approach*

### **General**

At present, *fitness* enjoys the highest priority with respect to the general meaning of sport. *Improving one's fitness by means of sport* is an almost unanimous answer cited in respective surveys. In Germany, for example, recent surveys about the attraction of various disciplines show that those connected with fitness rank highest: swimming, hiking, and bicycling to be practiced without any organisation, whereas institutions report the highest demand in the wide field of gymnastics as a means to achieve fitness (jazz-, wellness-, fitness gymnastic, fitness training, aerobics, powertraining, work-out, etc.). Here one finds that these opportunities are not only interesting for people already motivated for sport, but also for those who generally have a rather negative attitude toward sport. For both groups fitness training can become a fixed part of their lifestyle and have a positive effect on the physical, psychological, and social development of many people and thus give them an option to remain healthy, enjoy a high quality of life, and a high degree of well-being. Both, subjectively and objectively, the term *fitness* remains rather undefined and is largely determined by age. Whereas younger people generally equate *fitness* with health, well-being and increased strength of the body, grown-ups think differently, since they want to prevent risks and ailments by maintaining a high level of *fitness*. Generally people widely agree, however, that *fitness* in general refers to bodily ability and strength. Therefore, *fitness* is both, a general value of our society and a particular motivation for sport, especially in young people and in grown-ups, including senior citizens.

*Fitness* always has been attributed due importance in the training programmes of the armed forces. Promoting *fitness* in the course of training and educating soldiers towards this goal will remain a training priority. The *teaching concept* to be employed in this connection should, however, increasingly be based on the responsibility for the individual as a whole. It should be designed to foster bodily abilities in a most comprehensive way, attract and support both, cognitive and emotional levels in its educational efforts and be flexible in terms of intentions and methods, so that the emphasis can be put wherever needed.

These principles form the following concept of *Promotion of fitness and education towards fitness* by BREHM.

### **Promotion of fitness**

Training should not be a mere support of physiological functions only, but a most comprehensive increase of bodily abilities via five different approaches (*conditional, coordinating, relaxing, rhythmic, and expressive*).

- **Conditional approach**

Power, endurance and flexibility are the core of traditional gymnastic and fitness training in their different types. It is well known and documented that when combining dynamic and static stretching as well as training strength and endurance not only the capacity of these basic attributes is improved but this kind of training is also effective in producing an influence on the organic system in a prophylactic way. Additionally it contributes to master stress and to feel well. However, importance become more and more obvious to vary *directions* (regions and parts of the body as well as kind of strain) and *methods* (variation of dynamic and static work).

- **Coordinative approach**

Compared to the conditional approach the coordinative one is usually underestimated and neglected in its autonomous importance during training. Results of recent analyses underline for the enhancement of body functions, in particular the significance of *fluency*

(to be able to work in a coordinated way under pressure of time or fatigue) and *control* be able to produce precise coordinated movements in varying situations).

- **Relaxative approach**

The promotion of *looseness* and *release from tension* is important because *adaptation* is less effective if not combined with them. Both are reflected and effective in everyday's life (hyperactivity of young people, stress tension, etc.). *Loose muscles* are moved with low effort (use of weight or gravity), *muscles* that are *relieved from tension* are not moved but relaxation single-minded followed.

- **Rhythmic approach**

Rhythm is not only a characteristic of music (only) but also of movements, of the body, of our everyday's life and the life itself. Enhancement of *rhythm adaptation* and *rhythm design* are very important for both, the development of (sport) motoric processes and the well-being. Rhythmic movements are easier to be learned than unrhythmic ones, fatigue appears later in rhythmic exercise, activation, high mood and recreation are positively influenced by rhythm.

- **Expressive approach**

In the overall training for the body functions *expression* is the one farthest away from the traditional core of fitness promotion. However, body and movement are highly important means of self-presentation as one is estimated by others also via these means. Posture and attitude are in permanent interaction (*body language*). Training measures to cure faults of posture or its poorness should not look like gymnastic or rehabilitation but take into consideration emotional and aspects of motivation thus leading to an enhancement of presentation in a simple way.

### **Education towards fitness**

Being the superior principle it should address the cognition, emotion, and the motivation of the trainees. It should create *competence in fitness* in order to enable them to act and it should create *fitness awareness* to make fitness activities as a stable as possible part of their lifestyle.

- **Competence in fitness**

It includes the knowledge about *effects* (what changes in my body through endurance training?), *processes* (how can I train my endurance?) and the ability to *control* (to what extend does my endurance increase?).

- **Fitness awareness**

It requires positive experiences on an emotional level (to feel well after fitness activities). Therefore the selection of the adequate workload in a given situation should be determined by the subjective feeling in that particular situation, rather than by some training norm. When in doubt, the creation of a long-term fitness awareness takes precedence over immediate support, as the former is the precondition for the latter. Fitness awareness largely requires positive attitudes. Such awareness is reinforced by activities that go beyond a long-term goal and that have a meaning for the concrete situation as well.

### **Perception**

The intentional inclusion of sensory *perception* by initiating experiences and by directing attention should in the end become the central linkage in methodology for education to grow out of mere promotion. Improving bodily abilities along the lines to be supported takes a lot of time, and thus is limited within the restricted timeframe of on-duty training. Activation and guidance of sensory perception in the early phases of such promotion, however, permit the creation of emotional and motivating preconditions to activate bodily training beyond duty hours.