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## Workout Thought of The Month September 2015

So last month I promised to share a great tool I've been using for a while to help you listen to your body and to give you real time feedback on how your body is feeling.

Heart Rate Variability assesses the time between your heart beats. If you're stressed, your heart will beat in a more constant pattern than if you are not stressed - its our stress hormones which make our hearts beat in a regular pattern. We're talking tiny tiny differences between each beat here, its not a case of a diagnosed irregular heart beat being something to strive for!

Now, stress can be anything. It could be that you're stressed in the way we think of stress (kids driving you mad, too much to do - etc) or it could be stress caused by exercise, poor food choices, dehydration, fighting off a bug - whatever.



Some variation in your HRV is normal. You wouldn't expect to have the same high reading every day, your body naturally takes some time to recover from events in your life.

HRV is a fabulous tool for helping you learn what suits your body and what doesn't. I've found interesting things like if I eat a little protein within an hour I've exercised (even if I'm not hungry), my HRV is affected less by my workout than if I either don't eat at all after my workout, or if I eat something inappropriate. Interesting things happen with HRV if you're suffering from injuries - if you train hard on a low HRV day, you'll likely notice your injury doesn't feel as good as it has on other days; and you might even find you're more likely to get injured on a low HRV day.

Likewise, it provides reliable feedback on your overall health. If your blood sugar is

all over the place, for example, your HRV will always be on the low side, and as you get it back under control with better eating, you'll see your HRV rise.

I use HRV to guide me as to my activity levels that day. If I have a high score, I'll usually make an effort to build in a harder workout that day, and/or it might be a good day for a treat meal if I want one. If my score is low, I'll probably opt for low intensity activity that day, like a dog walk or gentle cycle or swim. Its rarely necessary to take a true day off and sit on the sofa immobile for 12 hours!

You'll notice your HRV scores correspond with when you're feeling good and when you're feeling not so good too. It gives you permission to go easy on yourself if you're feeling slow that day, and it tells you to crack on if you've got a high score!

There are several apps out there now which can assess your HRV. Some work with Bluetooth heart rate monitors, and others work by reading your heart rate through your phone camera. My preferred app is HRV4Training, but EliteHRV is good too.

Take your reading first thing in the morning before you've got out of bed. This gives you the most neutral and accurate result as you're taking your measurement before any stresses or foods have had a chance to affect you.

The more information you put into these apps, the better, so make sure you do it every day.

There are no real reference ranges to guide you; rather, watch your bodies trends and see what you can learn about yourself. In general though, the higher your HRV the better.

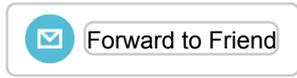
HRV monitoring is not the be-all and end-all, but its a really useful tool to use. There are a few other things you can get out of the measurements and I'm very happy to bore you with them [if you ask!](#)

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Until next time, enjoy staying healthy!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Heather". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then curves back under the name.



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