

Tough Going

For today's Alpha Males and Females, simply being trim isn't good enough. They want to conquer the world. Our columnist outlines how to ready yourself

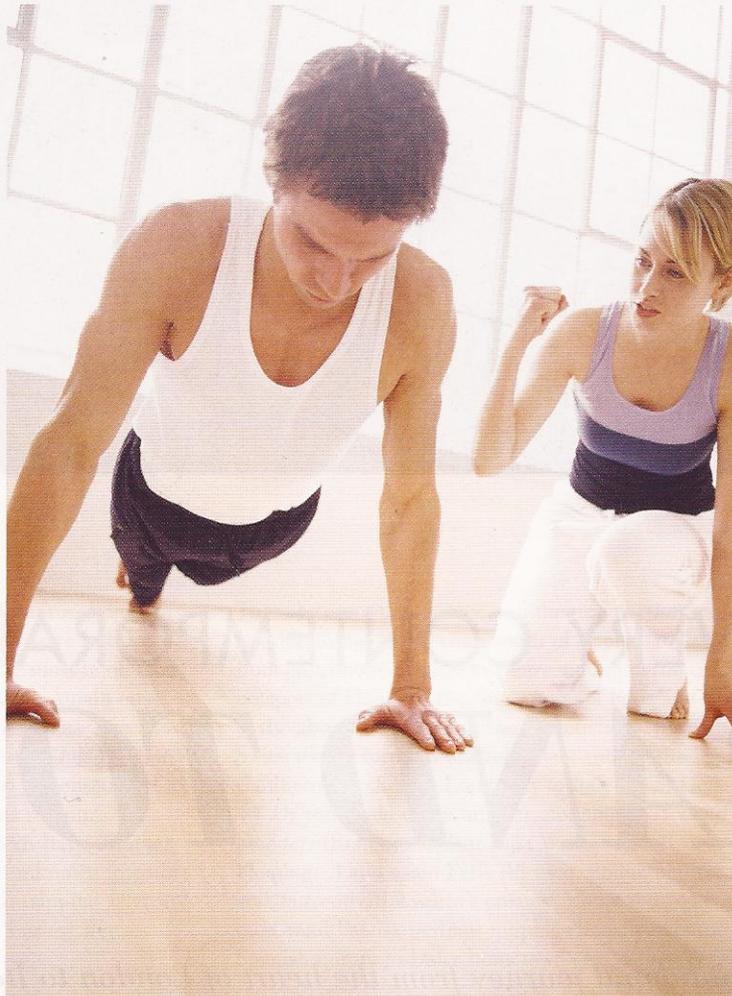
An extreme fitness challenge can be anything from mountain biking to rock climbing, running in the desert or swimming in the open ocean. Even walking or hiking. It is very popular because training for an event offers an experience that is different from day-to-day gym going – it offers a goal. If people have a goal, they work hard for it.

The key to training is to tailor your regime to the environment and challenge you will finally be facing. For example, if you are cycling or running in the desert, then you not only have to train for endurance, but also extreme heat and dehydration. In the gym, your trainer can actually get the heating going, then get you cross training. It doesn't sound fun, but then extreme training isn't fun!

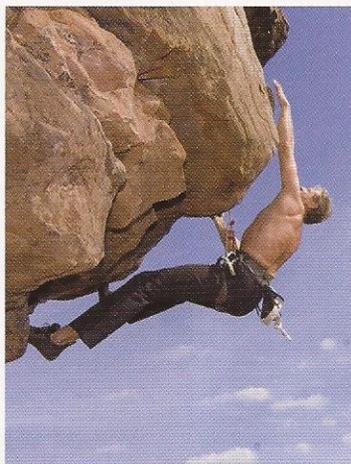
If you're cycling, there are classes, but trainers will also get their clients onto actual bikes, doing hill climbs. Muscles get depleted quite fast, so you need to try to work at a certain heart rate. Even if the cycle route is quite flat, training should include a lot of incline cycling, just to get the muscles engaged and prepare you to cycle for long periods of time.

For swimming a lot of your training will be in the pool, but you'll also have sessions in the gym to keep your cardio fitness up and to build up stamina. It's also a good idea to do some outdoor swimming – swimming in the sea is very different to a pool! Similarly, if you're training for a climbing challenge, then there'll be a lot of total body work, e.g. pull-ups, because that's what you do when climbing, but you definitely need to practice on climbing walls. It's all sport specific.

A personal trainer is really important to keep you focused and training effectively. If you're training on your own, you're probably not going to push yourself, and you've always got that little voice in the back of our head that says, "maybe I'll train



Extreme training should be sport specific to prepare you for your chosen challenge



tomorrow". If you've got an appointment with a trainer, and if you're paying for that appointment, then you need to turn up.

It is hard to fit this type of training into a busy schedule. Most people will be training 4 or 5 times a week, from 1-2 hours each session. It's a big commitment. However, there are things you can do to integrate it into your day to day life. You need to think ahead. If you're travelling for work, research gyms, climbing walls, cycling trails etc. Cities like London or Paris have some great trails just on the outskirts. Many trainers recommend

clients take a TRX with them, which is a strap which you can affix to a door or tree and uses your own body weight as resistance. You can also train without a gym: push ups are great for building upper body strength without weights, and running is the best exercise for building stamina.

Diet needs to be equally specific to an activity. If you were an Olympian, then you're diet would be a lot of carbs or protein, with a little bit of fat, whereas, for example, if you're going to swim the Tasman Sea, then you need a lot of fat, because it keeps you warm, and is a better source of fuel. This fat isn't from crisps, but foods like avocado, nuts or oily fish. Think about what types of foods you'll be able to get hold of when you're at the event and incorporate them into your diet.

Down time is what most extreme sports people don't get enough off, and by the time they actually get to run or ride, they're quite exhausted. When you're resting is when your body changes and adapts. It doesn't adapt when you're training – you don't actually get fitter while you're doing it, you need to take one or two days off.

Once you've completed a challenge like this you get quite a big buzz – it's a massive achievement. Also, you come back, you find your whole lifestyle has changed - you don't mind going to the gym, in fact you miss it! It's no longer a hassle because your body has adapted. It's a bit of an extreme introduction to gym going, but the mental benefits are unbelievable: people who have just climbed a mountain, or pushed themselves to the absolute extreme running a marathon across the desert come back and say, "what can I do next, I want to do it again".

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