

Embrace for the Unfamiliar

By Lesa Knollenberg

I'M A PTERODACTYL WHEN IT COMES TO TECHNOLOGY. Admittedly, I transition slowly into new, exciting technology and ease myself into using a new gadget like it's a reluctant sunbather at a cold pool.

So, it was with great trepidation that my husband gave me a heart rate monitor recently. (OK, it was three years ago.) It sat on my desk waiting patiently for me to fall in love with it, which I now have. At first I used it to monitor the calories I burned per workout. My smugness after running three miles quickly disappeared when I realized that I had only burned 300 calories. Only 300 calories? That's easily undone by eating two — yes, two — Oreos.

I've been a proponent of the "30-minute workout" for years. It felt reasonable to assume that 30 minutes of exercise per day would be enough to cover the kitchen cupboard raids during *The Biggest Loser* commercials. But here's the thing: Once you have information, you can adjust your actions. When I realized that my workouts weren't a ticket to eat *carte blanche*, I started to increase my calories burned each day. Mindful of the calories needed to burn off the croissant calling my name, I now try a cheery clementine, then brush my teeth before Jillian can yell at me.

To think it all started with a wristwatch and a band around my chest. The heart rate monitor keeps track of my heart rate, minutes exercised and calories burned. I've now calculated my lactate threshold, which helps me obtain my most efficient heart rate during cardiovascular workouts. It's amazing, this little watch, and to think it sat sad and lonely, just because I was intimidated.

I hate to imagine what I've missed out on because I was intimidated. When I first started writing, I wasted time and potential because publications wanted an SASE, and I didn't know what that was. I didn't want to ask. Alas, there was no Internet, but I'm a pterodactyl, remember? It turns out that an SASE is just a self-addressed stamped envelope, and with information, I changed my actions; I was a freelancing fool. A fool with a stack of rejection letters, but still, a fool.

Unlike me, a friend of mine is an early adopter, which means she is one of the first to jump on a technological innovation and figure it out. Her lack of intimidation amazes me.



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Likewise, I've noticed that high school track and field athletes have all sorts of information that they use to improve their speed. They can watch YouTube videos to help them increase fast-twitch muscle fibers. They wear computer chips in their shoes that feed results into their computer. They have access to performance information that we never had. I just had to trust my track coach when he said my left foot was dragging over the last hurdle. I thought he was old school.

I'm realizing now there is nothing wrong with old school. Sometimes, the tried-and-true is based on years of experience and testing. For example, I've noticed that the diet plates my mom ordered in restaurants during my youth (cottage cheese, hamburger without a bun, salad with little dressing and peaches) are now compliant with today's low-carb trend. High in protein, plenty of fruits and vegetables, they had it figured out in 1970.

Here's the naked truth: I don't want to be intimidated by the unfamiliar anymore. Maybe it makes sense to build on what we've learned, but be open to innovation. As the old adage goes: Make new friends, keep the old, one is silver and the other gold. The challenge is to balance between the old and the new.

I've learned a great deal from my new love, the heart rate monitor. If you're really cool, you call it an HRM. (Makes you seem smart, not like those ninnyes who don't know what an SASE is. Sheesh.) I've learned that there is a heart rate range that is comfortable for me and pleasingly efficient at burning calories. I can monitor myself during a long run and come away feeling satisfied in my effort but avoid injury. I am, after all, a pterodactyl. We're meant to fly. With my cushioned running shoes, my Bodyglide to prevent chafing and my HRM, I'm out the door to simply run today. I recently mastered the use of my iPod, and there are some new John Denver tunes I can't wait to hear. *mb*

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