

Intention

Intention is possibly one of the most powerful tools you can use when you are taking any kind of physical action to change your body. Intention is putting deliberate focus into an area to ensure that your efforts are being directed in the intended place. There are a couple different way of applying intention into your workouts.

For one, having an understanding of what a muscle does—where it connects, what it moves, the motion it creates—allows you to give specific focus on making sure that muscle is doing the work. For example, understanding that the Pectoralis Major (chest muscle) connects to your Sternum and your upper arm (Humerus) will help you to focus on bringing the upper arm towards the sternum via that muscle when doing a chest exercise. So often we just would move the weight up and down and hope or assume all the appropriate muscles are being worked. By intentionally focusing on the muscle making the movement happen you add an intensity to the exercise that will make that muscle work harder and by doing so, you will be able to reduce the amount of load/resistance needed to work that muscle and joint, which will save on potential wear and tear over time.

Once you have gotten the basic motion down on any given exercise, focusing on the muscle doing the motion will be much easier. Depending on how intensely you focus, you can alter the difficulty from inside without having to increase the resistance. One easy way to try this would be to take a normal light weight you would use for a Biceps curl and before you move the arm, contract the Biceps muscle (I assume most individuals can contract their Biceps muscle). Now, with the muscle contracted, start using the muscle to pull the upper forearm towards the shoulder. This is the concentric action of the Biceps muscles. The whole time you are going through the movement, keep your muscle contracted. Once you have gotten to the top end of the range, pause and make sure you are still contracted. Now, while remaining contracted, start to lower the forearm away from the shoulder—this is the eccentric action of the biceps muscle. Remember it is the Biceps muscles that are providing the control. My guess is if you focused on your muscle(s) in this way you will have felt your muscle working in a way that you have never felt before.

The other way of putting intention into your resistance (and even your cardiovascular routines) is to visualize what you want your muscle(s) to look like. With your eyes close, envision the finished product while you are going through your motion. Since you have already spent time working from the muscles' perspective (contracting from the inside) you will automatically be involving the same intensity as before but with an added deliberate intent on what you want these muscles to look like. By doing this, you are telling those specific muscles, your body, as well as your inner source, what it is you want. This will add a whole new element to your workout and will keep you focused on your outcome. If you are having a hard time seeing your end result then focus on what is believable for you.

If it is too difficult for you to focus on the muscle(s) area you are working on during the lifting phase, then take a moment to focus on it before you go into the exercise. Prepare your mind and body for what it is going to do and why.

I can't really say if "spot reduction" (like doing crunches to get rid of your tummy) actually works but doing this type of deliberate intent could be the closest thing. Remember, your body will follow your mind energetically, physically, emotionally and chemically.

Lastly, I must add that it is very important to be at peace with where you are in regard to making change in your body before you focus on the end result while exercising. If you are working out solely to make your body look better because you don't like where you are, your reasons for wanting the end result will be stemming from a negative standpoint, thus making the potential results less effective. Being at peace with where you are simply is the standpoint that you are OK with where you are and are excited about what is coming. You are exercising because of your excitement about what is ahead, not because you want to leave the body you do not like behind.