

After The Show

by Hannah Victoria Rice

When you started to submerge yourself into the fitness industry, what was the first thing you had to start doing? Working out. In the beginning, it was your “you time.” As you started to love the lifestyle, you then decided to prepare for a competition. It wasn’t stressful. You had excitement and looked forward to the challenge. Fast forward 6 months and you were deep into contest prep. You were in the zone.

For months you were accustomed to seeing yourself changing on a daily basis. Each day you saw improvement, and you eventually revealed your “best self” on competition day. Once the day of the competition arrived, and regardless of the outcome, at the end of the day, IT WAS OVER!

Post-competition blues are one of the most common struggles people in the fitness industry face. After months of preparing, there is no longer a competition to strive for; so how do you adjust? Here are a few tips that might help you “After the Show.”

Don’t feel guilty about taking time off.

People fail to realize that though contest prep produces some of the best conditioning ever, it’s unrealistic to preserve your “on stage” look all the time. After pushing yourself to the limit for 15+ weeks, your body needs a break! Rather, you’ll need to maintain a “new normal” as a lifestyle while continuing to strive to make improvements. Avoid making the mistake of trying to stay ‘stage ready’ year round. It will lead to burnout, metabolic issues, and unwanted pounds!

Keep a training schedule — but scale it back.

You don’t need to be doing two-a-day training sessions like you did during contest prep. Find ways to do a cardiovascular exercise that you enjoy. For example, instead of being handcuffed to the stairmaster, try going outside for a nice bike ride or run.

Allow more wiggle room in your diet.

If your competition was held on a Saturday, be off of your diet Saturday evening, Sunday and at most, Monday. Indulge and then get back on a plan. Start eating healthy but not quite as strict. The point is, if you eat clean foods 75% of the time, use the other 25% to enjoy your life, your friends, family and the physique that you’ve created! After all, you work out so that you can enjoy yourself every now and then. Trust me, your body and metabolism (if healthy) can handle it.

Monitor yourself.

Step on your scale once a week and be aware of how you look in the mirror as days go by. Each week if you haven’t

gained more than 1-2 pounds, add 100 more calories to your diet, until you notice too aggressive of weight gain on the scale or you see too much fat gain in the mirror. Allow yourself 1-2 free or “cheat” meals each week. This will keep cravings at bay and simultaneously allow for some psychological relaxation!

Reevaluate your expectations of yourself.

The enviable, stage-ready results that come with competition diets are a double-edged sword. Sure, you look great for the competition, but it can also make you think that “peak shape” must become your norm. It’s very easy to suddenly slip into the mindset that your physique reigns supreme above all. It doesn’t! Life is about your character, beliefs, attitude, purpose and the way you treat other people. A good way to keep your life in check to find positive podcasts, blogs, and books. Embrace new personal development goals not just physical goals.

Have a game plan.

Have a game plan of how you’re going to handle the first few days after your competition, as well as your new routine when you get back to training and eating for your ‘new normal’ rather than for a contest. Accept the fact that after your show, your razor-sharp physique will slowly disappear but at the same time your body will be thanking you for the break. After all, if done correctly, off season is where one makes gains and changes for future competitions. Enjoy knowing that you are now fueling your body to be its best. Let your passion, not obsession, for the sport get you through each day.

Always remember, competition diets are meant to help you bring your best physique to the stage. They’re not meant to last for months on end. The next time you feel guilty about what you put into your mouth, remind yourself that not every meal has to prepare you for the stage. If you’ve been living a dairy-free, sugar-free, low-carb, or low-fat lifestyle for a while now, ease back into “real life” slowly and learn to enjoy a variety of foods in moderation. More importantly, make the time to create memories by sharing a table and a menu with people you love.

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