

# HOW TO PROGRAM METCONS FOR HEALTH

Around the world people are waking up to the importance of fitness and its relationship to general health.

However, the current fitness market falls short in reaching this goal when it pushes intense fitness, short-term fixes, and complex exercises that are far beyond the capabilities of most clients.

There is a need for a new type of training that both supports health and is fun for clients. **Our answer is metcons for health.**

# What is a Metcon for Health?

The first step to designing metcons for health is to understand the definition of a metcon, short for metabolic conditioning.

Breaking it down, metabolic suggests a change in metabolism from training. Increased blood flow, heart rate, ventilatory rate, and thermoregulation are examples of metabolic responses.

Conditioning suggests learning through the experience of training.

Putting it together, metabolic conditioning is work that creates a metabolic effect that the body learns and adapts from.

Next, what is health? Is it a six-pack, the ability to run a mile at a new pace, or being capable of living life to its utmost potential?

OPEX Fitness defines health as **having great mental acuity, being prepared for your function, and being capable of living large and long**. These three things look a little bit different for everyone.

Compared to the traditional metcon, an unsustainable workout that prioritizes intensity over intent, metcons for health drive metabolic adaptations that support the three pillars of health: **mental acuity, function, and living large**.

OPEX Fitness defines health  
as having great mental acuity,  
being prepared for your  
function, and being capable of  
living large and long.

## Mental Acuity

Mental acuity is the ability to have a clear mind and have enough energy for decision making and concentration. Metcons for health are performed at a sustainable pace that doesn't cause post-workout brain fog and allows you to be sharp and focused outside the gym.

## Being Prepared for Function

Being prepared for your function refers to the ability to meet the demands of daily life. Metcons for health support your clients' function by building their muscle endurance and capacity, as well as supporting good energy rhythm.

## Living Large and Long

Metcons for health support longevity by creating healthy patterns of movement, aerobic fitness, and behaviors that last a lifetime. They do not encourage overreaching and are designed to be within your client's capabilities or just slightly outside, so that they don't get burned out or injured in the process.

# How do Metcons for Health Differ from Traditional Metcons?

Metcons for health are designed around six principles:

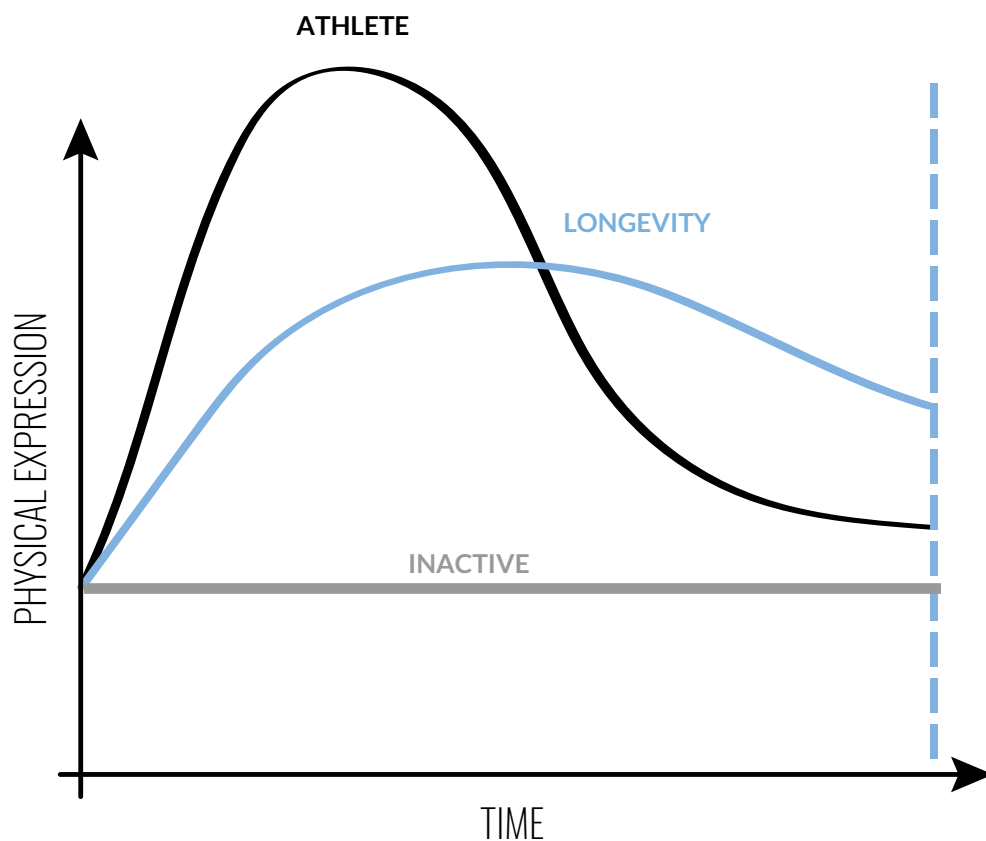
- ① **Start Slow**
- ② **Make it Sustainable**
- ③ **Keep it Simple**
- ④ **Basic Lifestyle Guidelines (BLGs)**
- ⑤ **Don't Forget Resistance**
- ⑥ **Educate on Intentions**

These principles are based on the idea that training for general health and fitness must differ from the athlete-centered model.

Clients that are training for health should not follow the same training as athletes. Athletes are pushing to reach the highest level of maximum physical potential, whereas general population clients are trying to extend the level of fitness they need to support the three pillars of health for as long as possible.

To continue your program design education, sign up for the [\*\*Program Design Essentials Playlist\*\*](#) and learn the OPEX principles that have helped thousands of coaches design better programs. Use the code **PDMADESIMPLE** for 50% off your purchase.

Training for general  
health and fitness  
must differ from the  
athlete-centered  
model.



When you look at these two types of training on a graph comparing **maximal physical potential**<sup>1</sup> to time you will notice that the athlete peaks high and declines faster, as demanded by sport. On the other hand, health-focused clients should have a slower and wider peak. To achieve this, their training needs to be more sustainable and gradual.

To support health, metcons must be designed in a way that your client can express consistently for a long time into the future. For this to happen, they need to be aerobic.

<sup>1</sup> **Maximal Physical Potential:** The highest level of performance a body is capable of.



# The Principles of Metcons for Health

## ① Start Slow

Start your clients with **long and slow metcons**. Think 15 to 60 minutes of steady power output. Ask your client to pick a pace that they feel they could maintain for four times the duration of the workout. It is better for the client to start slower and under-pace than to over-pace and get into threshold training.

It is possible to build to shorter, faster intervals over time as a client develops a robust aerobic system, so long as they can keep the intervals repeatable. However, you must understand what progression means for your client. Their goals may not require them to push the boundaries of sustainable aerobic power. Just because you have the tools for aerobic power progression does not mean you have to use them with every client.

### Example

30 Minute As Many Rounds as Possible @ sustained pace

400m [Row](#)

1200m [Assault Bike](#)

20m [Crawl](#)

Perform at a pace you could maintain for 2 hours

## ② Make it Sustainable

Keeping metcons aerobic means ***making sure that the power output is sustainable***. This means the client should be able to finish the workout, take adequate rest, and repeat it at the same pace. It also means that the client should show consistent power output across the entire workout. A great way to ensure sustainability is to use intraset repeatability, measuring split times and making sure they are repeatable.

### Example

#### 10 Rounds For Time @ sustainable pace

200m [Ski Erg](#)

10 [Walking Lunges](#)

Use a lap timer to show repeatability across all rounds

#### 5 Rounds for Repetitions @ sustainable pace

1 minute [Burpee](#)

1 minute [Single Unders](#)

Record scores to show repeatability across all rounds

### ③ Keep it Simple

Appropriate exercise selection is important to make sure that your clients get the correct response from their metcons. **Keep the training simple at first and progress to more complex work over time.** Start with simple exercises including cyclical activities, bodyweight isometrics and carries. When the client demonstrates good muscle endurance on these activities, then you can start to increase the load and introduce eccentric and concentric activities.

#### Example

##### **Simple**

20 minute AMRAP @ sustainable pace

20m [Farmers Carry](#)

30 second [Front Plank](#)

15 calorie [Assault Bike](#)

##### **Complex**

20 minute AMRAP @ sustainable pace

5 [Power Clean](#)

10 [Bar Facing Burpee](#)

15 calorie [Assault Bike](#)

## 4 Basic Lifestyle Guidelines

Before we discuss metcon program design, it's essential to ***educate yourself and your clients on the Basic Lifestyle Guidelines*** (BLGs).

These are a set of eight behavior principles that are simple upon reading, but rarely mastered. They must be implemented to support any training program and more nuanced nutrition prescriptions.

# BASIC LIFESTYLE GUIDELINES



There are 24 hours in a day; apply work and rest appropriately



You will one day die; get over it and get living



Water; 1/2 of someone's body weight in ounces per day is the recommended intake



Regulate circadian rhythms; go to bed and wake up at the same time every day



The earth spins, and the sun and moon correlate with our energy patterns; we need sun exposure and to sleep with the moon



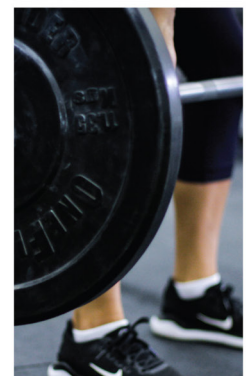
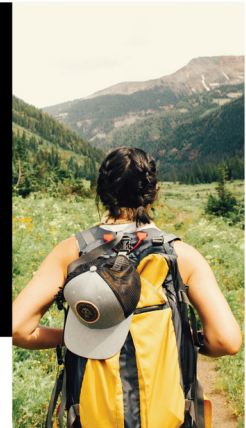
Moving blood and proper digestion are essential daily routines



Recovery; blood flow facilitates recovery and healing faster so be sure to move every day



Digestion; food is a 36-60-hour investment, aided by sitting down while you eat and chewing your food well



## 5 Don't Forget Resistance

Metcons are a powerful tool to improve aerobic fitness, but make sure your clients are ***still performing great resistance training with the intent of gaining lean mass.***

This has a host of associated health benefits, including fat loss, bone density, insulin sensitivity, cardiovascular health and of course, strength.

A sample workout day may look as follows:

Example	
A1	<a href="#">Close Grip Bench Press</a> ; 8-10 reps x 3 sets @2010, 90 seconds rest
A2	<a href="#">Barbell Hip Thrust</a> ; 8-10 reps x 3 sets @30X3, 90 seconds rest
B1	<a href="#">Ring Row</a> ; 8-10 reps x 3 sets @3011, 90 seconds rest
B2	<a href="#">Back Squat</a> ; 8-10 reps x 3 sets @3010, 90 seconds rest
C	15 minutes @ sustained pace (use lap timer to show intraset repeatability) 250 meters <a href="#">Ski Erg</a> 20 <a href="#">Prisoner Walking Lunges</a> 3 <a href="#">Strict Pull-Ups</a>

## 6 Educate On Intentions

High-intensity training is undeniably popular and it is common for clients to think harder is better when it comes to exercise. ***It is important to educate clients on the benefits of keeping their Metcons sustainable*** and how to use tools like intraset repeatability and pacing to help them learn how to do this.

Connect what they do in the gym with feeling great and their unique definition of a fulfilled life so that they can connect with the value of metcons for health. Education on exercise intent needs to happen in a one-on-one setting, where you can connect with them and use your consultation practices to get to the heart of their purpose.

# Metcons for Health Coaching Tools

Now you know the six principles of designing metcons for health, it's time to put them into practice. Here are two coaching tools to help you communicate these principles to your clients and ease the transition from learning to coaching.

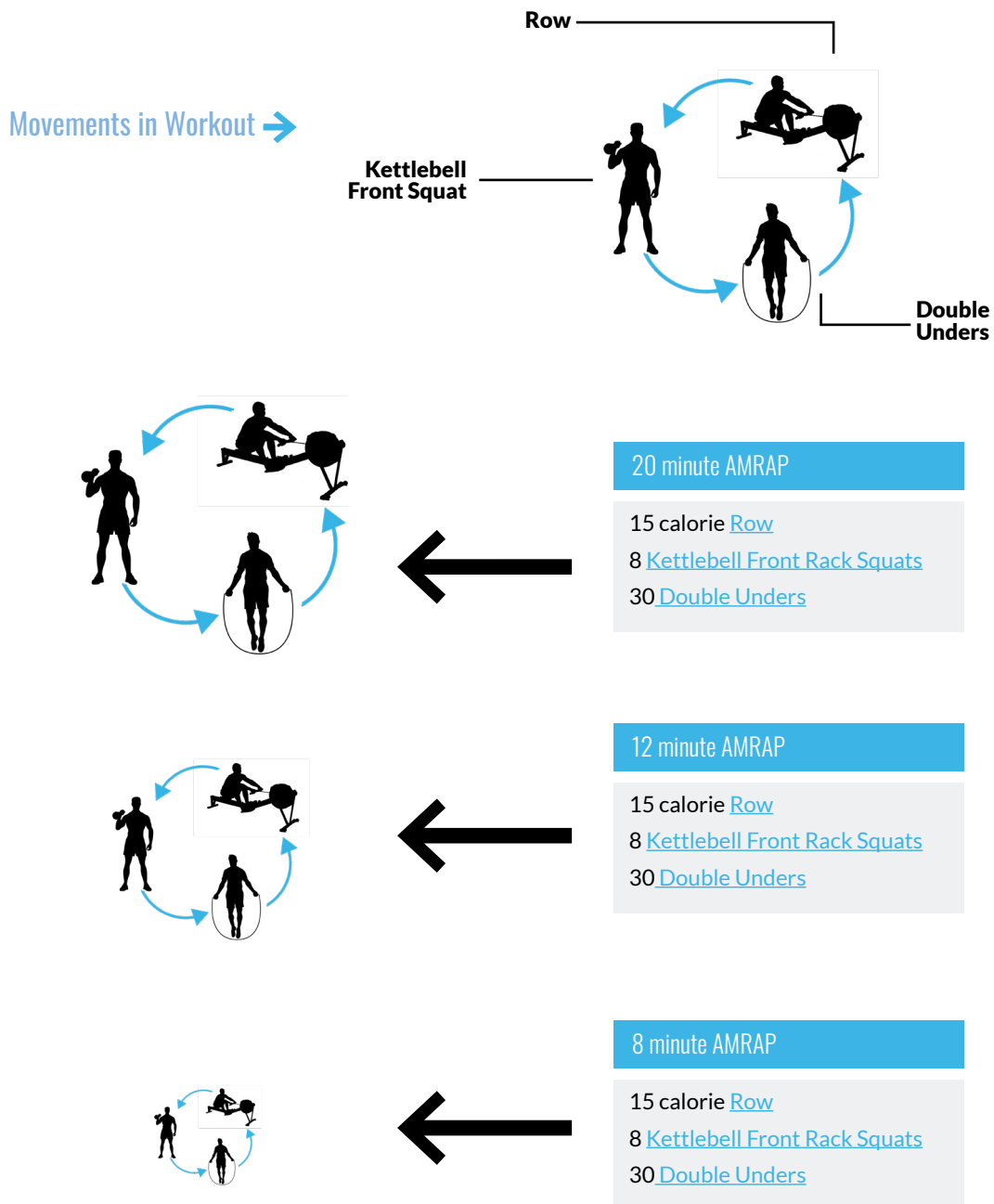
## Pacing Chart

The pacing chart is a great resource for both you and the client. On the left is the length of the metcon, and on the right is the pace the client should be following. For example, perform a 15 minute metcon at a pace that could be sustained for 60 minutes.

Metcon Duration	Metcon Intention
5 minutes	20 minute pace
10 minutes	40 minute pace
15 minutes	60 minute pace
20 minutes	1 hour 20 minute pace
30 minutes	2 hour pace

# Cadence Graphic

The cadence graphic is a great visual representation to share with your clients to communicate the approach they should take to mixed modal metcons of different durations.





# Metcon for Health Avatars



CLIENT LUCY

**Sex:** Female

**Age:** 38 years old

**Occupation:** Nurse

**Training History:** Yoga and spin class twice per week for the last year

**Goals:** Have the energy for her long hospital shifts and the strength required for tasks like moving patients. Stop persistent back pain after a particularly intensive workday.

## Coach's Assessment Notes

The [OPEX Move assessments](#) revealed that isometric core strength is a priority for Lucy. She scored 43 seconds on her right-side plank and 41 seconds on the left. A passing score for the Move Level 1 assessment is 60 seconds.

## Coach's Design Intent

The workout is progressed by increasing the number of rounds and duration of the side plank each week while sustaining pace and mechanics.

Sustainability is demonstrated by scoring calories for each round and holds are only progressed if Lucy can maintain the set duration across all rounds.

Metcon 1	Metcon 2	Metcon 3
<b>4 RFT @ sustained pace</b> 2 minute <a href="#">Assault Bike</a> for cals 20 second <a href="#">Side Plank</a> , Left 20 second <a href="#">Side Plank</a> , Right 100ft <a href="#">Goblet Carry</a> @35# 30 second <a href="#">Wall Sit</a>	<b>5 RFT @ sustained pace</b> 2 minute <a href="#">Assault Bike</a> for cals 25 second <a href="#">Side Plank</a> , Left 25 second <a href="#">Side Plank</a> , Right 100ft <a href="#">Goblet Carry</a> @35# 30 second <a href="#">Wall Sit</a>	<b>6 RFT @ sustained pace</b> 2 minute <a href="#">Assault Bike</a> for cals 30 second <a href="#">Side Plank</a> , Left 30 second <a href="#">Side Plank</a> , Right 100ft <a href="#">Goblet Carry</a> @35# 30 second <a href="#">Wall Sit</a>



**Sex:** Male

**Age:** 29 years old

**Occupation:** Copywriter

**Training History:** Three years of metcons in a group class

**Goals:** Avoid Dad bod and set an example for his young kids by embracing and enjoying Functional Fitness without aches and pains.

## CLIENT BARRY

### Coach's Assessment Notes

Barry has passed [OPEX Move](#). He can do 25 push ups and can deadlift 1.5x his bodyweight for 3 reps at 30X0.

### Coach's Design Intent

The workout is progressed by increasing the exercise complexity and intensity each week.

Barry will use a lap timer to ensure his pace remains sustainable across rounds.

#### Metcon 1

5 Rounds @ sustained pace  
400m [Row](#) @2:10/500m  
20 [Walking Lunges](#)  
15 [Push Ups](#)

#### Metcon 2

5 Rounds @ sustained pace  
400m [Row](#) @2:10/500m  
20 [Dumbbell Walking Lunges](#)  
@25#  
15 [Burpees](#)

#### Metcon 3

5 Rounds @ sustained pace  
400m [Row](#) @2:10/500m  
20 [Barbell Front Rack Walking Lunges](#) @95#  
10 [Burpee Toes to Bar](#)

# Why Metcons for Health?

Every person is unique and requires a different type of training to meet their goals. What a 35-year-old mother of two needs to support her daily life is vastly different from what the 23-year-old functional fitness enthusiast needs to look good and find a date!

So why should they train in the same manner?

The answer is **they shouldn't**.

Great fitness coaches understand this and believe the best training program is the one made specifically for that client.

For the last 20+ years, OPEX Fitness has been teaching coaches to create highly personalized exercise, nutrition, and lifestyle programs for any client with any goal through the [OPEX Coaching Certificate Program \(CCP\)](#).

In [CCP](#) you'll develop the knowledge, systems, and professional skills you need to build a thriving fitness business and a successful coaching career.

Take the next step in your professional coaching development and **START CCP TODAY.**

**START NOW**

# THE PROGRAM DESIGN ESSENTIALS PLAYLIST

Are you a coach struggling with writer's block when designing training programs? Do you find yourself spending too much time pondering squat variations and rep ranges, only to feel overwhelmed by the entire session you're creating?

Designing the perfect workout that balances enjoyment and effectiveness while delivering consistent results for your clients may seem like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be that way. Embracing a principle-based approach to program design can simplify the process significantly.

Discover the power of the OPEX Method, a comprehensive program design approach that will make even the most challenging client's goals attainable.

If you're not yet ready to fully commit to the complete [OPEX Coaching Certificate Program](#), we have the perfect solution for you. Dip your toes into continued education with the [Program Design Essentials Playlist](#) course bundle. Unlock the knowledge of OPEX principles that have already helped countless coaches like you design superior programs. Plus, here's a little extra incentive: **Use the code PDMADESIMPLE and enjoy a 50% discount on your purchase.**

Empower yourself as a coach and take your program design skills to the next level with OPEX's principle-based approach. Don't let writer's block hold you back—create exceptional training programs with confidence!

**BUY NOW**





# READY TO BECOME A CCP COACH?

COACHING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

An OPEX CCP Coach is a trusted fitness advisor and a partner in delivering results to clients. They are leaders on the front lines, making a real difference in the lives of people in their community. Ultimately, what makes OPEX CCP Coaches stand out is their ability to meet their clients where they are at — regardless of age, training history, lifestyle, or goals — and design a comprehensive personalized fitness program.

## ARE YOU READY TO BECOME A LEADING FITNESS PROFESSIONAL?

[LEARN MORE](#)

**OPEX** 