Warning: Reducing intensity can be habit forming. Please consult your CrossFit trainer immediately.
You have to do Fran today.

Stop reading, close your eyes and really think about that for a moment.

Note the freefall feeling in your chest, the sweaty palms and the subtle changes in your breathing.

Now consider this statement:

You have to do Fran in less than 12 minutes today.

I bet you suddenly don’t feel nervous at all. You might even view the reps as a warm-up for another workout.

Provided you’ve scaled properly and aren’t slogging through singles at maximum effort, a 12-minute Fran is a relative cake-walk. A fairly proficient athlete could do the round of 21 in about 2 minutes, then take the next 7 or 8 minutes to recover before banging out the 15s and 9s in another 2 or 3 minutes. It wouldn’t be that bad. Or you could steadily chug through 1 rep every 8 seconds or so, occasionally throwing in a triple to allow for a few adjustments of your knee sleeves and several checks to ensure the phone is recording your efforts for Facebook.

Same weight, same reps, same workout—different results.

Intensity burns. It tastes like a mouthful of old pennies soaked in battery acid.

Intense burns. It tastes like a mouthful of old pennies soaked in battery acid. It makes you dizzy. It causes you to writhe around on the ground trying to work the misery out of your muscles. It usually requires a period spent on your back or butt, and sometimes it sends your lunch back the way it came in. Intensity gets caught in your throat and keeps you hacking hours after the workout ends.

Intensity also brings results. Push someone out of the comfort zone and physiology adapts. Do that regularly and fitness improves dramatically. After more than 15 years of workouts on CrossFit.com and six years of the CrossFit Games Open, we can make that statement with certainty backed by data.
To get even further out of your CrossFit comfort zone, I’d encourage you to experiment with workouts similar to the wall-ball challenge detailed above.

**Air Force**, with 4 burpees preceding the work every minute, is a good example of a nowhere-to-hide workout. Or try 500-meter rowing or 400-meter running repeats with a thruster penalty for every second under a certain challenging but achievable time.

Another option: Create a workout with a scheme about 2 reps out of your comfort zone and vow to do all sets unbroken. Fran at 23-17-11 might present an excellent challenge even if it lacks the mathematical grace of the original prescription. Or you can create workouts in which a certain number of reps must be completed every 60 seconds. If you pick the right amount of work for your fitness level—say 15 wall-ball shots and 10 heavy kettlebell swings, for example—you’re going to have to work hard and go unbroken to get the work done in each minute.

To reap the greatest benefits from CrossFit, you have to be willing to push yourself, to be uncomfortable, to suffer for reward. And most of us are most of the time. The whiteboard and the rivalries thereon are powerful motivational tools. Still, a 5-minute Fran can become a habit if you let your mind trick you into dropping the barbell well before you need to.

Remember: Objects in motion tend to stay in motion, while objects at rest tend to head to the chalk bucket.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Mike Warkentin is the managing editor of the CrossFit Journal and the founder of CrossFit 204.