

Working up a sweat

24 Jan 2021

Got some good exercise today. Didn't go for a walk, much less hike or run. Didn't do any pushups or jumping jacks, didn't swim or jump rope. But I worked up a sweat, nonetheless.

Today, Mary and I reassembled our elliptical machine. ('Re' because we had it in use for a few months in the old house before we decided to move again and had to break it down to get it down the winding stairs. Pivot!)

Now, one might think that two people who between us have built or at least put together all manner of structures and mechanical contraptions would find it a simple matter to put together this device, for which written instructions with detailed drawings are provided and which, as I've implied, we have successfully assembled once before. The trouble is, it's been six months since we did, the instructions are badly written and the drawings badly drafted. I mean, I've encountered inadequate assembly instructions from time to time but these seem to have been intentionally designed to make you so frustrated that you'll give up and call the installer out.

Yeah, not gonna happen. Not at your prices and not during Covid.

It's ironic that they do such a bad job of the printed matter because the equipment itself is flawless in design, fit and finish. Everything is sturdily made, not one bolt hole is cross-threaded, and once together it provides a smooth ride from the get go. But those directions – grrrr...

So, you might wonder why staring dumbly at an inadequate owner's manual would cause one to work up a sweat. It doesn't. What caused most of the exertion was holding heavy things at arm's length while the other person tried to thread the various wires and cables through blind tubing with obstructions mid-length. Poor instructions were bad enough. But the real annoyance was that the various cables were cut so short that it took multiple tries to attach the connectors.

I'll never understand why a manufacturer cuts corners in stupid places. It would have taken a competent tech writer a couple billable days to make the instructions clear, comprehensive and concise. And the total marginal costs they would have incurred in providing cables of ample length could not have been even a dollar, all told. We're talking maybe six or eight wires cut off maybe four inches longer. I'm betting their kitting process leaves more than that on the manufacturing floor.

We got the damn thing assembled – again. But Mary and I are pretty good at manual stuff and we have a garage full of tools and doodads that made the process simpler. Things like combination wrenches and hard plastic shims and a flat bar. I have to wonder what would happen to a buyer with little skill and no tools to speak of. They'd undoubtedly end up calling the overpriced technician. And resenting spending the extra money. Worse yet, they might try to brave it through and wind up damaging some of the electronic connections. Which would have kicked in a whole raft of customer service 'experiences.'

I love this machine and expect to do so for as long as I can still ellip (word? Hmmm... mebbe not). It's a gem. But I wouldn't recommend it to a non-tool-savvy friend who was shopping for an exercise machine. Which is too bad because it really is well designed and made.

Sigh...

Anyway, I worked up a sweat today. So, there's that.