

Newsletter - Thoughts on Exercise

"If you run every day until you're 90 years old, I guarantee that you'll live a long life." -- Boston Marathon Champion Bill Rodgers.

I've always loved this quote in relation to its humorous take on exercise in general. However, Bill is on to something here. When it comes to our health there are few things that are as important as regular exercise. The question is, how does one get started?

Summertime is the preeminent time for beginning regular exercise. Many of us are naturally more active during the summer months as we are less apt to "hibernate" and find easy excuses for avoiding the cold weather and darkness outside. Why not capitalize on those healthy urges and make more physical activity a natural part of your weekly routine? Getting off to a good start will set the right tone -- mentally and physically -- and with some early success you'll be less likely to see your resolve weaken over time.

Exercise does not have to be an "all or none" phenomenon. A little is better than none and you can do something today so don't focus yet on tomorrow or the next day. Taking it one day at a time can be a very effective approach to getting started.

Once you have settled into a routine the momentum to keep going will be much easier to maintain. At the same time, do not expect success overnight, but do expect to take those small steps every day at the beginning. How you begin does not need to be terribly elaborate. Many options are out there for you. Finding the right activity may require some trial and error but sticking with your efforts is crucial.

We are all aware of the tremendous benefits of exercise to our physical and psychological well being – not to mention our longevity. The question frequently becomes: How do I stick to it?

- 1) Don't try to do it all at once! Start out slowly and build up activity gradually over a period of months. This avoids the pitfalls of soreness, injury and the big ones: burnout or boredom.
- 2) Try to accumulate 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity cardiovascular exercise daily. You can do all 30 minutes at once, or break it up into shorter bouts (such as 10 minutes 3 times/day)
- 3) Try to add some weights twice weekly to build strength (muscle burns more calories – even while your sedentary).
- 4) Incorporate physical activity into your daily routine. Walk to the office, store or for your lunch break. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Park in the far spot in the parking lot. Little adjustments such as these to our daily routine add up to better fitness over time.

5) Choose activities you enjoy, find satisfying, and give you a sense of accomplishment. Include friends or family if you can. Enlisting others provides extra encouragement & support. Join in physical activities with your children. Ride bikes, play ball or tag or whatever the game of the day is. If you have a baby, schedule a walk with the stroller each day (Meet a friend at the mall or gym in the winter months to get this one done). Make the activities as convenient as possible.

6) Schedule your exercise into your planner just as you would any other appointment. Making the time to exercise and then sticking to it is one of the most important requirements for long term success.

Above all keep a positive outlook. Remember to be patient as the results do take time. You will not become a regular exerciser overnight. In fact, theories of behavior change report that it takes 6 months of practice before your risk of relapsing into not exercising decreases. Remember, the one who doesn't climb the mountain can never see the view. Always keep in mind the best reason to exercise is for the right reasons: good health and well being!

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