Wishing is Passive, Commitment is Active!

Establishing a Lasting Resolution to Exercise

Did you know that 45% of Americans usually set a New Year’s Resolution and that 47% of those people establish a resolution related to self-improvement and 38% make their resolution related to weight loss? However, it is likely that you are aware that the majority of people who establish New Year’s Resolutions have failed to stick to that resolution by July of that year. These statistics paint a picture of an overweight society that is unhappy with their self-image and can not seem to make any lasting changes to improve their situation. Sadly, this assessment might be true due to the growing obesity and depression rates in this country. It is estimated that 68% of all Americans are clinically overweight and 9.5% of the U.S. population are affected by depression disorders and both of these numbers are on the rise. Fortunately, if you do fall in either one of these categories there is hope; it has been proven that a lasting commitment to obtaining regular physical activity can be extremely beneficial in combating many health conditions. In addition, there are many more benefits that can be achieved by participating in regular exercise such as:

- decreased blood pressure
- decreased cholesterol
- increased heart proficiency
- improved lung proficiency
- better sleep
- increased energy levels
- decreased stress
- weight management or loss
- improved muscular strength
- improved blood flow to the brain which can enhance overall mood
- overall decrease in risk of many chronic diseases such as heart disease and osteoporosis

It is important to note that these health benefits are only achieved through regular exercise. Therefore, if you are among those that desire to begin exercising but can not seem to take that infamous leap of faith then perhaps these tips from inspirational author Serge Prengel may help you commit to an active lifestyle!

In Prengel’s published work covering New Year’s Resolutions, he states that in order to make any resolution be effective and lasting, the desire to change must be a personal decision that you have established for yourself. Secondly, he writes it is important to establish goals that are specific to you, your body and your schedule. Some examples include: “I want to lose ___ lbs. by ___/___/___”, or “I want to eat a more balanced and nutritious diet”, or “I want to exercise 3 times per week after/before work”. Another key aspect of keeping a successful resolution is to always be mindful of those goals you have set. He recommends writing down your goals and keeping track of your progress, as well as sharing
your goals with friends or family that can keep you accountable and encourage you along the way. Lastly, Prengel says it is critical that you take control of your goals by establishing specific steps that you are going to take to obtain your goal. For example, establish and abide by a time and day of the week that you will exercise that fits your schedule best. Other proactive steps that can be taken include visualizing yourself at your goal, learning about proper nutrition and diet, deciding whether you will sign up for a gym membership or use at-home exercises, determining what type of exercise you will be doing and for how long, and what type of exercises you should perform. Fortunately, I have a few simple tips that might help you in making decisions about your exercise program.

Exercise is often thought of as confusing and complicated but you can easily remember the 4 key components of exercise by using the F.I.T.T. acronym. These components are:

- **Frequency** – 3-7 days per week is the recommended frequency
- **Intensity** – Exercise should range from moderate to vigorous intensity
- **Time** – 20- 60 minutes of exercise OR 60-90 minutes if weight loss is your goal
- **Type** – Aerobic, strength training, participation in sports, and your body’s capabilities are all things to be considered when selecting the type of exercise

You can find more information on these components as well as the recommended guidelines for exercise in the previous article titled How to exercise: The Basic Foundation.

It is important to remember that a gym or fitness center can be a valuable tool for exercise but is not required. Walking at a brisk pace is a great form of exercise for most people and many other exercises can be performed at home such as lunges, push-ups, sit-ups, and using small dumbbells or other weighted objects to provide some strength training. Exercise can be fun if you find activities that you enjoy and there are many local resources available to you to help you in that search. Make sure to check out the links and information that have been provided on this site as well as the information I have provided below about exercise and the recommended guidelines for exercise.

Remember that improving your health does not happen overnight, so stay motivated and know that over-time you will begin to see the benefits that you have achieved. It might be helpful to use journals or logs to monitor your progress. Obtaining regular exercise is one of the best tools available to achieve great health. Therefore, I encourage you to set a New Year’s resolution to obtain exercise and stay committed to that resolution. It will pay off in time and you will feel great about yourself and your resolution to improve your health!

If you have not been exercising regularly then it is imperative that you begin slowly and work your way into the guidelines listed above. Please note that if you have any health concerns or reasons you do not think you should be exercising,
talk to your physician before beginning any exercise program.

The complete ACSM and AHA 2007 guidelines for physical activity can be found here:

http://www.acsm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home_Page&TEMPLATE=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=7764

Also, you can find much more information about beginning and maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle by visiting the American Heart Association’s website. There is information on proper nutrition, exercise and fitness tips for all ages, and information about heart disease and risk factors. The link is:

http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200009

More local resources can be found at this link:

http://www.healthylubbock.org/

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