

## Keeping Your New Year's Resolutions

Are you one of the many people who fail to stick with New Year's resolutions? How about that fitness resolution? As a personal trainer and manager, I see this all the time and it is one of the reasons I got into this industry. I enjoy helping people succeed at achieving a healthy lifestyle. Unfortunately, exercise is the first thing to be pushed aside when the day gets busy. Whether you have an appointment to keep with a personal trainer or an appointment with yourself, it is an appointment to be kept. My intention here is to point out how important exercise is, even for those not trying to lose weight, or with serious health problems.

One thing we all experience is stress. The Holidays can be a wonderful time of year, but also very stressful. Stress is a vicious cycle -- we become stressed, we over eat, we gain weight, become less mobile, experience health problems, and then become more stressed. Stress can take a physical and mental toll on us all, and have an affect on our behavior. Additionally, when we become stressed we produce more of the hormone Cortisol, which can contribute to weight gain.

Just as stress can be a vicious cycle, exercise can be a positive one. Exercise can have an immediate affect on stress, by releasing Endorphins. These hormones help to ease pain and produce a euphoric effect. Exercise will also help you sleep better, which should allow you to handle daily stressors better.

Starting an exercise program does not have to be a difficult task, but you will need to make a plan and commit to it. Now that the weather is cooler it is a great time to walk the kids farther in their strollers, take the dogs out for long walks, or plan to go for a walk or run by yourself.

The first step will be to pick a day and time to start your first exercise session. If you are planning on going for a walk or run, drive your car through a loop of the neighborhood and clock a comfortable distance, but one that will still allow you to feel like you worked hard. Commit to a time either before or after work, then write this goal down to help you to stick with it. Next, think positively about following through, do not dread it. If your walk is going to require you to wake up earlier, go to bed when you are tired, set your alarm, and get up as soon as it goes off. Once you get started it will be much easier to continue, remember habits are typically formed in 21 days.

If you need a little more incentive – walking or running one mile, burns roughly 100 calories, and you must burn an extra 3500 calories to lose 1 pound. The benefits of exercise are near endless, and include reduced stress, less back pain, improved cardiovascular health, greater bone density with weight bearing exercise, increased muscle mass, reduced percent of body fat, improved posture, and much more.

Make 2008 the year you commit to your health, and a fitness program. It will be the best gift you can give yourself!

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