

A NEW YEAR...A NEW YOU?

By
Trish Schwartz

Imagine that it is December 1, 2003. You might contemplate that the year 2004 is just around the corner and that would be an excellent time to get into fitness gear! “If you start now, by December 1, 2004...only one year away...you could finally have the body and fitness level that you have dreamed of for years!” **“For years”**...is the key word here. Why would anyone think this next year would make a difference?

These thoughts are commonplace for many individuals at the beginning of every new year...a dream created at the aftermath of the holiday hedonistic health holocaust...sugar cookies, egg nog, and cheese ball indulgences. Oh yes, and don't forget the chocolate rum bon bons. Things we do not normally eat, right? But even though your company Christmas party offered healthier alternatives like low-fat dips, fresh vegetables and some real nice salads, you chose the junk instead, justifying that it was the holidays and its OK! Well, it is not OK...at least not to the point where you have a free-for-all with food and end up gaining weight.

That is the type of mentality that belongs to people who are not really living a fitness lifestyle. If you gain over two pounds during the holidays, you are basically out of control. That does not mean you should not enjoy holiday delectables, but you should not over-indulge in food nonstop from Thanksgiving until New Year's day and allow the hectic season to get in the way of your regular exercise. If you are not true to a real fitness lifestyle, this year will be no different than any other year.

So you say, “well this is it...this will be the year I will get fit, once and for all”. Unfortunately, for many, that dream is short-lived once they whole-heartedly delve into their new fitness regimen. Why is it short-lived? Because the fitness regimen they take on is more like a torture chamber. Many New Year fitness hopefuls get way too “gung-ho” and take on programs that are uncomfortable (too difficult to perform and too painful to tolerate), unrealistic (too ridiculous to stick to for the long-term), and unsafe (too radical...very stressful on the body and injurious).

Let's face it folks, by nature, we are all pleasure-seeking creatures. Self-deprivation, self-inflicted pain, hunger, and grueling workouts do not fall into the “pleasure” category. Maybe some strong-willed masochists can hang in there for awhile, but I would give most people about two months before they quit. Somewhere along the line, people have gotten the idea that fitness is suppose to hurt...suppose to feel bad...suppose to involve eating twigs and berries and never, ever, ever sink your teeth into a greasy pizza or rich dessert. WRONG!

Being fit feels good... physically, mentally, and emotionally. Taking the right approach to fitness is easy and comfortable, you just have to know how to make it that way. In addition, you have to understand your genetic capability to achieve certain levels of fitness and physique. Then, you pursue realistic, livable and achievable goals.

Our society has bombarded us with “perfect” physical images for too long. Ninety percent of the population cannot and will not look like that perfect cover girl or guy unless they beat themselves up. That is not being fit!

The following list gives guidelines to get you started on the right track this year:

1. Pursue good health and physical fitness and a better physique will follow.
2. Be patient. Getting back into shape takes time. Weaning yourself of the bad habits you have developed takes time.
3. Change your mindset to a fitness lifestyle that you live everyday...not just three months out of every year. This is not a temporary pursuit. This is how you live your life every day for the rest of your life.
4. Be mindful of what you eat and how much activity you take on everyday. Start with making better choices. Allow three steps forward and one step back...not three steps forward and five steps back.
5. Change your attitude. Be positive and empowered by your new energy and ability to perform better, not only physically, but mentally as well. Focus on the other benefits of fitness like being more productive, more creative, improved relationships with people because you feel better about yourself and have less stress.
6. Think in moderation. Your food intake should be food you enjoy that is good for you. Pizza is not junk food, its just high-calorie food that should only be eaten on occasion. Potato chips are junk food. You don't need them and neither does your family! Apples are awesome tasting snacks and very good for you! That does not mean you can't eat a piece of cheesecake once in awhile!
7. Get over your excuses! I could come up with just as many as you, but I won't. Excuses are a ticket to failure.
8. If you don't know what to do, get a good fitness book or hire a “qualified” personal trainer. Most of the time, your own common sense will guide you.