

The Resolution to Exercise



The idea of making New Year's resolutions dates back over 4000 years. Whether you believe in making resolutions or not, January seems to be a time when people embark on the effort to change their ways.

For some, that means starting an exercise regimen.

For many, the first inclination is to get out and run. Go jogging.

I say, bad idea.

I did that and I have the bursitis to show for it. Jogging is a high impact exercise. The pounding of your joints on pavement, or even a treadmill, is going to catch up with your body.

I don't recommend high impact exercise. My husband, the ex-marathon runner, can tell you all the years of jogging he did were not his best plan either. He knows that now. Any kind of high impact exercise will eventually wear out your joints. His knees wore out. Then, his back started hurting. For others it might be ankles or hips.

Sports medicine clinics make a lot of money off of joint

replacements. Stands to reason. Sports Medicine is code for "orthopedic surgeon." So I don't recommend treadmills unless you are only going to walk or do very high intensity sprinting for very short (1-minute or so) bursts. No jumping rope, bouncing around doing aerobics or anything else that can potentially injure your joints. If you have been seriously overweight for too long, you probably already have joint damage from carrying the weight around. Don't make it worse.

So here are some ideas for lighter exercise that can do a great job of toning you up without the bodily damage that high impact exercise offers.

If you want Michelle Obama's arms you are going to have to get out some light weights or elastic bands to tone up. I have arms that many women refer to as "bat wings." It's going to take me time to get them to tone up. This will not happen overnight. If you want that popular dip in your arms that men and women both wish for, you're going to have to get out weights.

What other exercise do I recommend? Things like Pilates, yoga, swimming and weight lifting. Done correctly, none of those will injure your joints, but they will build muscle. You can really work up a sweat doing Pilates or yoga if you get to the point where you can do the difficult moves. These are not exercise routines for wimps. On the other hand both Pilates and yoga have levels that are easy and enjoyable. I do yoga and weight lifting every week.

You don't need to exercise in order to lose weight. That's what Plan Z is for (our dieters lose an average of 31 pounds in 50 days *without* exercise). When you exercise, what you really want to do over time is strengthen your core, increase flexibility and build bone density and muscle mass. You don't want to become that slumped-over elderly person. You don't want to need one of

those chairs that pushes you out of it. The more you build your core the stronger your whole mid-section will be. That will keep your posture in good shape and keep you from having things like an achy back. Flexibility is important at any age but even more as you age. Tying your shoes can be an aerobic event when you are fat. I know. But tying your shoes and keeping your independence to bend down and pick things up, chase after grandchildren or even your own children are important too. Both Pilates and yoga will help. So many of us have desk jobs these days we have to do something to help stay flexible. I ache like crazy sometimes after a yoga session. It's not because it was difficult to do but it's because I used muscles I don't use at other points during the week, or I twisted in ways I don't twist when doing my work. These are the good aches.

You want to exercise to keep your heart strong and improve your lung capacity. You do need to move fast enough or train hard enough to work your heart a bit so it gets stronger. Our VP of Anger Management and others recommend programs like the ones described in a book called Body by Science by Doug McGuff, MD or the P.A.C.E Program by Dr. Al Sears. Check out both of those for ideas on how to exercise safely and effectively.

For weightlifting, our absolute favorite way to do it is a program called Super Slow. It's not available in all markets and it's not cheap. You do Super Slow with a trainer who monitors all of your activity. I got to the point where I could leg press over 500 pounds and bench press over 160. That's more weight than a lot of guys work with. But you have to do that with supervision. The great part is it only takes one workout per week. My husband has done this for over 10 years now and he's in better physical shape than he was when he was an All-American high jumper. He's buff for a guy over 60 years old and he doesn't obsess over being in the gym. You can try to do it yourself by reading a book called The Power of 10.

If that's not an option for you, consider another weight program of some kind. Remember to be careful in keeping good form so you don't hurt yourself. It can be a good idea to work with a trainer to watch your form and keep you safe. Urge them to read the books we recommend so they can help you implement a plan.

Choose your exercise plan wisely and get the benefits that will last a lifetime.

Cheers,
Enjoy!