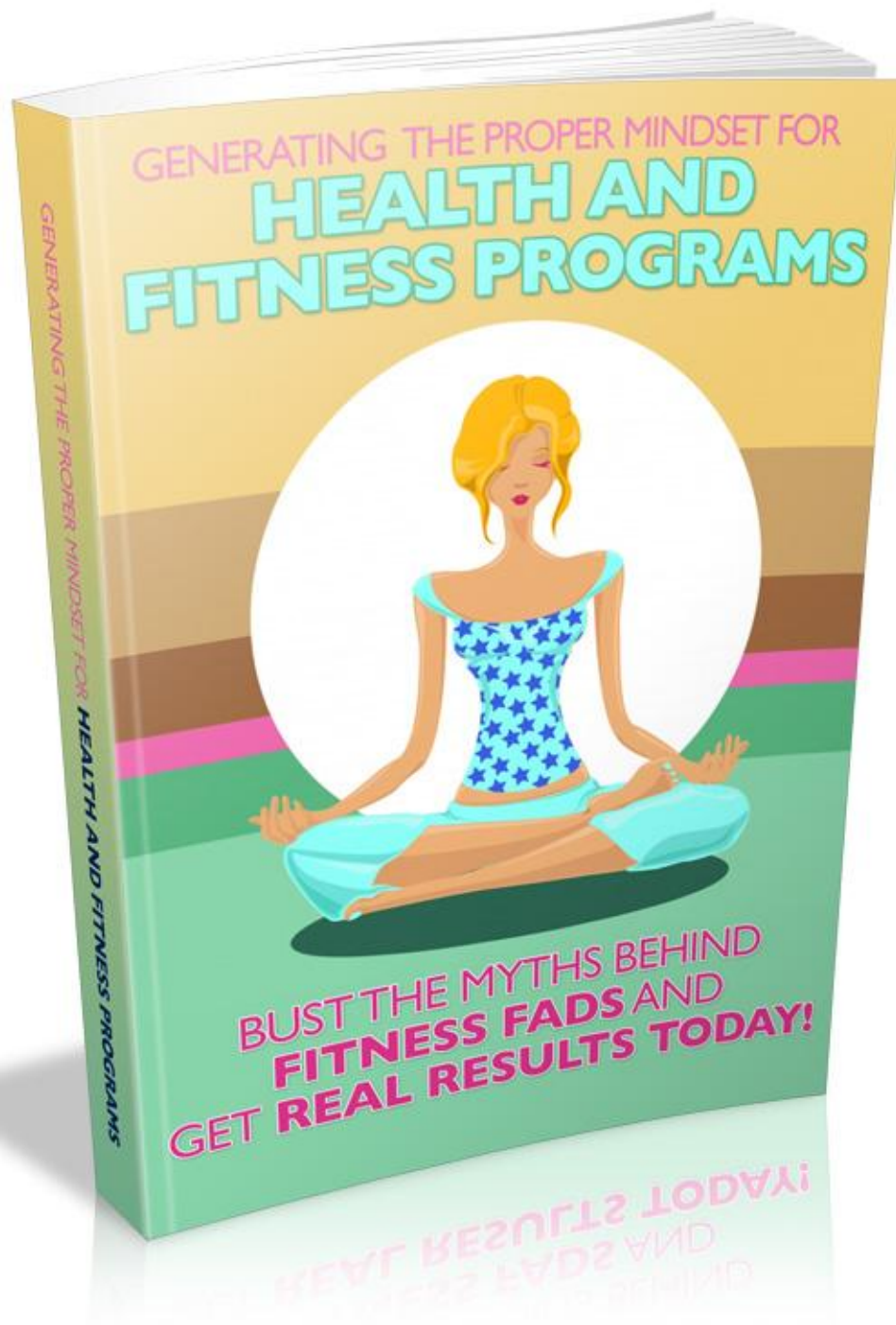




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Ensuring You Keep on with Your Health and Fitness Program

Introduction

It happens so very often – we resolve to go on with a health and fitness program with gusto and probably much fanfare too, but in the first week of entering the program, everything fizzles out.

Why is it that we don't stick to the diet plans, the morning jogging plans, the workout plans that we make?

And what can we do to ensure we keep on with these plans, for our own sake and for the sake of the people that are dependent on us?

Scroll on to read.

Chapter 1:

Why Do Most Health and Fitness Programs Fail?

Summary

In today's world, rarely do any health and fitness programs work. What's the reason for their alarming rate of failure?

Why Do Most Health and Fitness Programs Fail?

We hear it a lot – Someone takes a gym membership and then lets it die without a whimper. Someone takes up a diet and then returns to gluttony the next weekend. Someone does a great deal of expensive shopping from big-name brands for morning routines and then wears the filthily expensive tracksuit for lounging around at home. This bug is all around us – People make grandiose plans to start health and fitness programs and then let go of them at the drop of a hat. What goes wrong?

When we hear about the failure of diets or gym programs all around us, usually it isn't their fault. Usually it is the fault of the people who started with much hoo-ha about going through these programs, telling all their friends and colleagues about it, and then did not follow those programs through to the end. The people who leave midway do not see the benefits, of course, and the commercial fitness enterprises lose their face.

What the world needs today isn't a new health or fitness program, but it needs motivation. It needs the right kind of mindset to follow through with whatever program they have chosen to the very end. If they can do that, most of the health problems that are related to lifestyle situations will become passé. And we don't have to travel to the corners of the earth to find this motivation. The motivation lies right here, within us; we only need to search it and use it.

And this we need to do before even thinking of joining a health program.

So the next time you see that a program has failed or is receiving a lot of criticism, remember that the criticism isn't probably because the program stands on shaky ground. In most cases, it is because people began with great intentions and then did not follow the program as they should have.

Chapter 2:

Determination and Motivation – Your Most Important Allies

Summary

The main thing you need is motivation. As it is true in everything in life that you do, it is true here as well.

Determination and Motivation – Your Most Important Allies

The most important thing that you need to keep your health and fitness program alive – even more important than an instructor or a doctor – is your own motivation. You have to be determined to take stock of the situation. So, you are overweight and are looking at shedding some pounds. No gym instructor from anywhere in the world will help you if you don't take adequate measures to have the right diet and to stick with your routine exercise. Even if you are sick and are looking at treatment, no doctor will help if you aren't determined in following the treatment program, whether it is taking the medication at the right time or abstaining from some foods.

Why, even God doesn't help people who don't help themselves.

So, before even thinking of going ahead with a fitness or a health program, the one thing you need to be sure of is your own determination for it.

You have to make sure you will be motivated to carry on the program till the end. The best way to do it, of course, is to think about the end result. If you are planning to enter into a weight loss program, you could think about the great body you will have if you follow the program for a few weeks. In fact, you could go right ahead and shop for some jeans or even a bikini which is five sizes smaller than you are presently. The people who sell you that will think you are nuts, but you know what you are trying to achieve. Actually, stand up and tell them that this is what size you will be when you enter their shop again!

The same applies for every health and fitness program. If you have some cardiac ailment right now, think about how sticking to the right medical program will make you after a few weeks. You will be able to do things as before; your life will be richer.

The best way to keep yourself motivated is always to think about what is to come. Think about the result of your efforts. The efforts you need to put in won't seem so very difficult then.

Chapter 3:

Selecting the Right Program

Summary

It is highly important to choose the right program from the crowd.

Selecting the Right Program

The health and fitness industry is probably the most saturated industry in the world today. Part of the reason for that is people try out one program and then fail because of their own lack of determination and then think the program is worthless and try another. What the health and fitness industry doesn't tell people on their face is that they are failing mostly because they are not able to resolve themselves to stick to one program. They will probably fail with this one too because their minds are rolling stones, but it doesn't matter because presently they are spending thousands of dollars on buying their products.

It works that way. But the fact is that the industry is saturated. So what do you do when you are looking at a program for yourself? If it is a health treatment program, your choice is simpler. You just go to a doctor that you have faith in – usually your family physician – and then do as they say. But the issue is very much complicated if you are looking for a viable fitness program. What do you use to stay fit – diet, exercise, aerobics, calisthenics, what?

Researching on the Internet is not the answer. What you will find mostly is articles full of sales pitch, written by people who are trying to promote their own product. They won't have any qualms in painting some other perfectly good product with a negative color if they can improve the impression of their own product. The world gobbles it, so it works.

Now, if you want to choose a program, the best thing you could do is to head to your nearest bookstore. You should first narrow your choices to two or three fitness programs that really interest you. It is great if you get to speak to some people who have used the programs you are contemplating on and who have absolutely no commercial interests whatsoever in promoting what they are doing. Join a health and fitness club. This is a great place to meet people who are conscious about their fitness and they won't mind giving you great advice. Many

fitness clubs have their own libraries too, so you could find a lot of educational material in them.

When you get the books on what you are thinking about, take time out and read them. Read them mainly to understand what you will have to do, how much time you will have to devote, what equipment you will need, whether you will be able to do what is mentioned, what the results will be and how soon you will get them, etc. These facts will help you decide whether you want to be with the program.

Don't trust anybody when it comes to deciding a fitness program for you. Most people will have commercial interests. Some well-meaning souls will give you advice too, but they may be limited in their knowledge. It is best to speak with impartial experts, like your doctor, or read books and form an initial decision. Of course, you need to speak with a qualified person before making your eventual decision about what program to take.

Chapter 4:

Starting Slow

Summary

Fools rush in; wise men take things one at a time.

Starting Slow

The key is to start slow. When you start your health and fitness program at a slow pace, you are much more comfortable with it and you get used to it better.

So, when you are embarking on your fitness regimen, don't commit the mistake of taking long strides right from the start. This is especially important when you are going to do things your own way. For example, if you are going to go jogging each morning, don't plan on jogging for an hour right from the first day. Start slow – maybe do just 10 to 15 minutes the first day. You probably haven't exercised since a long time. Hence, there might be a problem with your stamina too. When your stamina increases, you will be able to exert yourself for longer. But if you think of going the whole hog right from the start, you will be exhausted to the point of giving up.

The same applies when you are trying to go on a diet. You could not possibly give up all your favorite foods all at once. This will actually put you into depression and make you give up promptly. Depression also does something that will be detrimental to your weight loss plan. It releases a hormone known as cortisol. This hormone – also known as the stress hormone – will make you mentally weak and will make you vulnerable. You will give up your plan sooner because of the release of this hormone.

Instead, you could start by giving up a few of the unhealthy foods at the start and work them out of your schedule slowly – probably over a week or something. Even when you are on a strict diet, it is advisable to have at least one interesting meal per week so that you don't feel too stressed out. In fact, you will be looking forward to that special meal each week.

When someone is trying to give up smoking, this is the approach followed. They are told to go on a reduction system, where they begin cutting down on the

number of cigarettes they smoke each day. Over time, they drastically reduce their extent of smoking.

Thus, when you are trying to get into a long-term health and fitness plan, it is not right to start drastically all at once. Start slow and then build up the momentum. That's the way it will work for the long term.

Chapter 5:

Target the Right Parts of the Body

Summary

Specialization and prioritization are two essentials if you want to do things the most efficient way, especially when it comes to deciding a suitable health and fitness plan for your needs.

Target the Right Parts of the Body

One of the biggest problems in following health and fitness programs arise when people don't know what they should really do. This makes them try out things that they shouldn't be doing, which actually prove ineffective for them. Not just that, but they also spend time and exert themselves in doing worthless things.

Take the example of someone who needs to gain muscle on his chest. Now, if this person tries a workout routine that focuses on other parts such as his legs, he wouldn't be doing a very wise thing. There are many exercises that can target the chest specifically. Finding out about them and using them in your methods can bring the quickest results.

That is what you need to do. When you are looking at a health and fitness program for your needs, look for a specialized one that will provide you the benefits you are looking for. This ensures that you get your results quickly and because you don't overexert your entire body, you have better chances of keeping up with the program.

In fact, some people try prioritizing their fitness regimens. They see what they need to do first and focus their energies on that. When that aspect of their fitness has improved, they move on to another. Such focused attention works quite well, especially in today's world when we are cramped for time and don't want to spare the effort either.

That is why most of the gyms have a structured program for working out. If you are joining a gym after a long time of physical inactivity, you will find that they will instruct you to focus more on building your stamina first. For that, you might be asked to work on the treadmill or an exercise bike a lot initially. Once you have built up your system's capabilities, they will ask you to slowly start with resistance training. But, before that you might work out with a lot other things.

You might be focusing on one particular aspect one fortnight and then move on to another area. This actually helps you – you are working out as per what your body needs.

Now, if you were to go all out at once, you would end up stressing your body to the max and this could be disastrous to your long-term planning. You might stretch your body so extensively that you will not be able to lift a finger. When that happens, people don't stick to their fitness plans.

The mistake here isn't of the program itself; it is of the way in which you approached it.

Chapter 6:

Get Your Friends Involved

Summary

Friends can help in a lot of ways when you are trying to keep up with a health and fitness program. They could be the support system you need and could motivate you immensely.

Get Your Friends Involved

Your friends could be quite instrumental in making you stick with your fitness plan. Many health and fitness advocates say that if you work out with a friend, you do much better. If you have someone to go to the gym with you, or diet with you, or accompany you on your morning jogs, you stick much better to your routine and to the program itself.

There are many reasons why it works. The main reason is that the boredom does not creep in when you have a friend to work out with. We aren't bored when we are with our friends, are we? Also, there might actually be a healthy competition triggered between the two of you. You might want to see who can lift better weights, who can jog more, who can diet better, etc. All this keeps you highly involved in your fitness program and also quite motivated.

In fact, if you have a friend to accompany you in your health and fitness programs, you will actually start looking forward to that time of the day when you can work out with them.

But even if you cannot get someone to work out with you, you could involve them in other constructive ways. Just tell a few good friends that you are starting a health program. They will be all for it. They will even give you suggestions on the best ways to do it. But, suppose that all of that doesn't happen. They don't give you suggestions and, on the contrary, they start mocking you. Even that will help. You can take their mockery in the right spirit. When friends tease you, you get the fire burning inside you that tells you to show it to them. Consciously or otherwise, you will double up your efforts just to show them that you can do it. Your friends keep you motivated even when they don't know they are doing that.

The next time you feel like gorging on that pastry when you are with a friend who knows you have started a diet, you will think twice. Chances are you will pass the

pastry on. You won't eat it. That is because you won't like to falsify your resolve in front of a friend. But if you haven't told your friend about your fitness program, you would have no qualms about binging with them.

This is how friends help you. Even if they don't say anything, and are actually unlikely to do so, they create a feeling in you that makes you want to stay with your health and fitness program.

Chapter 7:

Chart Your Progress

Summary

Keep aware of how you are changing for the better. It encourages you to keep changing for the better.

Chart Your Progress

A very important thing for you to do when you are on a fitness program is to keep checking how you are progressing. This can keep you highly motivated, especially when you see that you are becoming what you want yourself to become.

So, when you are on a diet program, weigh yourself often, doesn't matter even if you do it several times a day. When you are jogging, check how many steps you can climb without breathing. When you are working out at the gym, keep checking your abs and chest. When you are on a program to improve your blood sugar level or your blood pressure, keep monitoring yourself. In fact, go for more frequent physical checkups just to see how well you are progressing.

Humans are very much result-oriented people. We want to see facts and figures – we want to see things as raw as they can be. This is the reason why charting your progress continuously can help you immensely.

When you see that your waist size has come down from 38” to 36”, when you see that you can get into skimpier shorts, when you see that you are closer to touching your toes than before, you become very much pleased with yourself. You see that your efforts are bearing fruit. This keeps the fire burning.

Initially, you will want to monitor yourself quite often. Your family may even mock you for that. But it doesn't matter. You need to know where you are heading. So keep looking as much as you want. It is only when you are in love with your body that you will think of doing something for it. And no one loves your body more than you, so the onus of making it fitter and healthier is entirely on you.

You have every right to know how your body is shaping up. The best part is that this eggs you on to do better for your body. So keep monitoring yourself and keep working out to your heart's content.

Chapter 8:

Keep the Motivation On – Give Yourself Incentives

Summary

Rewarding yourself is one of the best ways to ensure that you keep doing the right things.

Keep the Motivation On – Give Yourself Incentives

Time and again, reward yourself for your achievements. However, don't reward yourself with a food treat; that will only make matters worse. In any case, we are too much fixated on food. When we are happy, the first thing that comes to our mind is a treat that involves the worst kinds of unhealthy foods possible. And this is what brings on most of the health problems that we face today. We could do much better from a health point of view if we cured our fixation with food.

But you could always give yourself a healthy incentive. You could go on a trip, for example. You could take a break from work and simply hang out at home, watching DVDs. Or you could cook a healthy meal all by yourself at home if that interests you.

However, the best incentive is looking in the mirror. When you see the improved shape you are in, you will want to congratulate yourself. In fact, you should keep some of your old photos for comparison. When you know how well you have turned out so far, you will want to go all the way. You will feel that it is quite possible for you to take further steps.

Go shopping. Buy clothes that fit your newly reworked body. You will be so happy about buying jeans that are two sizes smaller. You will feel you have achieved something special.

You have to understand something here – When you measure yourself at home and see that you have reduced, you are happy. But you become much happier when you reward yourself for it. When you buy smaller waist jeans you see the practical connotations of your fitness program. You actually see the benefits. This is what motivates you to keep working on in the future. If you see these benefits and then begin rewarding yourself for it, you will see that you are able to push you toward better health and fitness achievements.

Chapter 9:

Head to the Gym... Even if You Don't Want to

Summary

Get yourself to the gym each day, even if you don't think you want to work out.

Just heading out to the gym can help you immensely.

Head to the Gym... Even if You Don't Want to

One of the ways in which you can motivate to keep working out is by simply taking the effort to go to the gym. Research shows that most people who quit their gyms don't do it because the exercises are too stressful to them; they do it just because they don't want to make the trip to the gym! Sounds corny, but it is true. If you have joined a gym before, you will be aware of this feeling. You don't mind the exercises, but you do feel bored about putting on your gym gear and heading out to the gym, which is probably too early in the morning for you.

If you don't want to go to the gym on one particular day, try this ruse. Try telling yourself that you will just warm up a bit on the treadmill and then move out. Tell yourself that you won't do anything that needs you to exert much. When you convince yourself that way, you are likelier to head to the gym.

But when you are there, you will see a change happening in your way of thinking. When you see all those people diligently working out there, you will get motivated too. And when you start out on the treadmill, you will find that your stamina is building. When that happens, you will tell yourself that you could try one more exercise. You might go on to the exercise bike. That may induce you to go to the weights and then the resistance training and so on. Sooner than you think, you will find that you have had your complete workout!

Studies show that this approach works in 90% of the cases. i.e. 90% of the people who come to the gym reluctantly, thinking that they will only work out for 5 minutes, end up working out their full routine.

The same applies with other things. If you are feeling lazy about going for jogging, convince yourself by saying that it is only for a few minutes. You might tell yourself that you would do nothing more than one lap around the park. But when you are into it, you feel that you might as well complete the whole thing.

Chapter 10:

Ensuring You Stick to Your Health and Fitness Program

Summary

You can keep going, just be convinced that you can.

Ensuring You Stick to Your Health and Fitness Program

Given the large rate of failure of health and fitness program worldwide, it is easy to see why anyone will have a fair share of apprehension when they try to get into such a program themselves. They are bound to think whether such programs will work for them or not. Even when you join a gym, however much enthusiastic you are, somewhere in the corner of your mind you wonder how long you will be attending the gym. Such damaging feelings start when you haven't even had your first workout at the gym.

Mainly this happens because the world over people are joining health and fitness programs and then leaving them midway, reducing even very well-meaning programs to mockery. It is their weakness that makes them quit, but the world doesn't waste any time in jumping to the conclusion that something is not quite right with the program.

One of the best favors you could bestow upon yourself is to condition your mind into thinking positively about the program you are about to join. Don't keep any space for pessimism. There is no reason why you should think that the program won't work for you. Think that it will work. Think about all the benefits you will get because of that. Think about your sexier body shape, your healthier heart, your improved physical capacity, and you will want to carry through.

Think about how you will become a better individual. Think about how you will be able to travel to all those places when you are healthier. Think about how your bank balance will improve because you will become more productive. Think about how you will get better prospects at work because you are healthier. An improving professional life is what sets most of us thinking.

Also think about how you will be able to spend more quality time with your friends and family. Think how you won't be the one sitting in the corner when they are having fun right in front of you. You will be able to join in the revelry as well. If nothing works, take a look at your children, if you have them. Wouldn't you like to be with them for a longer time? Wouldn't you like to see how they progress in life under your guidance?

We come back to square one actually. The best thing to make any health and fitness program work is the right motivation. And determination. You have to make sure you keep yourself pepped up so that you follow through till the end. See yourself in a newer light. That will really help this highly important task you are embarking upon.

Conclusion

There it is – Everything you need to never ever quit a health and fitness program again.

Soon you will be seeing a new you.

Just because your perspectives have changed. Just because you know now how you must start with your health and fitness programs so that you follow them through for life.

All the best to you!!!