

Is There Life After 50? –

Part 3 - Exercise

“We do not stop exercising because we grow old; we grow old because we stop exercising”

- Dr. Ken Cooper - Cooper Institute

Concord, MA - November 11th, 2011- In this third part of our series on **Life over 50 - Neglect** we look at the issues dealing with Exercise.

N - utrition
E - XERCISE
G - eneral Health
L - ongevity
E - nergy
C - onfidence
T - ime

Much has been made over the years about the search for The Fountain of Youth. According to legend Ponce de Leon thought he'd found it in Florida in 1513. Others believe it existed in the waters of the mythical Bimini. Well I have good news. You don't have to go to Florida or Bimini. It's much closer to home and it's wherever you are. It's called Exercise. Ok, so maybe that's not much of a revelation, but I'd be willing to bet that a part of you already knows it and believes it.

It's hard to avoid these days. We're inundated with great information about how exercise can help with heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, depression, osteoporosis, cognitive function, sleep. I could go on! The question for most of us is, "If I know exercise is so good for me, why is it such a struggle to do it?" The answer to that question is hard because how we pursue exercise will be different for us all. The whys/how's/whens/where are unique to you only. So, what follows is a somewhat broad outline of how you might go about **beginning, building and maintaining** an exercise routine that fits your life for the rest of your life.

Understand who you are! Is your commitment high or low for starting your exercise? If low, then maybe you need to begin with a trainer to overcome that initial inertia we all go through when beginning. Very often when working with clients, by about the 4th or 5th session the motivation rises as the client begins to feel the benefits. If your motivation is high maybe your local gym would be a good place to start where you have all the facilities but the attention might be a little more low key. Do you tend to be more internally motivated versus externally? I have always been a 'carrot and stick' kind of exerciser. I set goals for myself and some of my clients throughout the year that require us to meet particular workout objectives. Some of my other clients are motivated to exercise daily because of the energy and 'high' they get from it throughout the day. Also, can you work out at home or do you need to 'get away' from familiar surroundings that might make it difficult to 'carve' out that time for yourself? Are you an early morning person or do you feel better exercising later in the day? Both have benefits but which one suits you? Are you social and need a buddy/group environment or not? What is your budget and what arrangement (home vs. club vs. trainer) holds the most value for you? Very often we

will have clients who have us create their program and then take it home where they do the work and perhaps once a month we meet to review and re-challenge.

Where do you start? This is the \$64,000 question and will require an understanding of where you are and where you want to go. You've heard the advice before.....consult a physician before you embark upon an exercise program. This is sensible and necessary and answers the 'where you are' part. Where you want to go will depend on the goals you have for yourself whether they are for general fitness/health or to accomplish some specific task/event. Within the past year for example I have had one client who was able to finally stop taking his blood pressure medication and another who at 70+ years of age climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Make a plan and start slowly. Very often this is where a trainer can help you to plot out the steps and implement your plan. Your plan should include a combination of Aerobic, Strength and Flexibility exercises. Start slowly and build this into your life! Perhaps you might find that devoting 30 minutes a day fits easier into your life than 3 to 4 x 60 minutes workouts per week. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends building up to a minimum of 150 minutes of aerobic exercise per week, a minimum of 2 sessions of strength training involving a mix of 12 to 14 moderate and vigorous exercises and at least 2 days a week of stretching exercises. If you haven't exercised in a while then you should expect that it will take a while to build up to this and achieve your goals. Take small 'bites'. Even 10 minutes a day is a good start when before you were doing nothing. In fact the worse shape you are in, the quicker you will see results and the more you have to gain. What a deal! Also, initially fitting this into your routine will be hard but get easier with time. The old adage about success in life requiring showing up certainly applies here. I often joke with my clients that the hardest part of their workout is walking through my door!

Building and maintaining your routine. So you've started and you're beginning to feel the benefits. What next? Well, understand that your exercise 'journey' is just that....a journey with twists and turns. If we use the analogy of our 'journey' you will need to understand that there will be stops along the way for various reasons: we get sick, go away on vacation/business and can't exercise, our kids get sick....something always comes up. Expect that this will happen and it's ok. Never beat yourself up about time lost from your routine. That will only create a bigger block to resuming. Whenever you've had a break long or short, back down and DO NOT expect to jump right back in to your full routine. My first workout after any significant break is 15 minutes long and I build slowly from there!

Within a few weeks of doing your routine your body begins to adapt to the 'stresses' you've been placing on it and it might be time to change things up. This is where a professional might help. You will need to expand and change your 'repertoire' of exercises as you move forward so that each workout has a different 'hit' to the body and continues to meet your needs. Try new things. Both within your workout and outside. Your new fitness and strength should allow you to consider activities that perhaps you thought you'd never do again. This, in turn is what will encourage you to stay with your routine.

As you move along your exercise path it is good thing to review your goals from time to time. Nothing stays constant. This reminds me of a time about 10 years ago when I had just started

working with a small group of women. One of the first things they told me when we began was, "we don't run!". Well, 2 years later they all finished the Boston Marathon for Dana Farber. Exercise truly does open up paths to new possibilities and we age there is no reason, other than a little planning, commitment and change in lifestyle, not to embark on that journey yourself. Why don't you start yours today?

About the Fitness Group

The Fitness Group has been providing leadership in personal health and fitness for over 25 years. With the philosophy that exercise can be an enjoyable, fulfilling and life affirming process, The Fitness Group provides focused, one-on-one training designed to meet your specific needs and goals. The Fitness Group programs include strength training, weight loss, sports specific training, partner and small group training, post rehabilitation, function for life, spin classes and teen team training. The Fitness Group Studio is located on 45 Winthrop St. Suite E in West Concord. Visit our website at HYPERLINK "<http://www.thefitnessgroup.biz>" www.thefitnessgroup.biz or call 978-371-5515.