

WHY WOULD YOU BOTHER?

There is no need to apologize. When you are asked why you train, and you take a honest look at your motivation, you know that you are supposed to say, 'to improve my health', or 'to feel better', or even 'to improve your performance in other activities'. But, the real, honest, bottom line reason is to look better. It's tough to say it to yourself, never mind out loud, "I train so I can wear those new jeans and a tight t-shirt and not look like a pork sausage on the barbeque, ready to split its skin". But the truth is, most people train for that very reason. It's funny, but when someone gets a nose job, or breast implants, or covers up their graying hair, it's considered an acceptable quest to improve self esteem. But if you are very diligent and meticulous in your training and eating habits, you are ego-centric, or self absorbed, or fanatical. Personally, I think that is simple jealousy rearing its ugly head. But the truth remains, unless faced with an extreme medical crisis, most of us train because it makes us look better than we would if we didn't. Kind of like spending the time doing your hair and make-up in the morning, only the cost and benefits are much greater. The health thing, well, that's only a pleasant side effect.

We used to think that simple recreation, or even competitive recreational sports would be enough to keep us young, tight, and sag free. Then we discovered that playing woman's league basketball, or hockey doesn't build muscle, it uses muscle. And while our skill levels were maintained, our waists and hips continued to increase in direct relation to our age. Playing our sports didn't increase our flexibility, or endurance, or strength much. And our fat to muscle ratios continued to soar. And we were told that as we increased in age, our fat deposits would climb, and the amount of muscle we had would steadily drop. Some of the luckier ones will brag that they are the same weight that they were in high school. But the proof is in the pudding: they certainly don't look the same, which attests to replacing muscle tissue with fat. And if you look around you'll see that too many of us have fallen into the trap that we cannot avoid the inevitable. The final nail in the coffin is that all our good hormones begin dropping after puberty, until we are left with the raging metabolism of a stud hamster.

I'm here to tell you that with some hard work, changes in lifestyle and diet, and a positive outlook, you can stave off and even reverse much of that middle age spread that has been accumulating over the last little while. I've listened to people comment on those Bow-Flex Home Gym infomercials, saying that it's impossible for a 50 year old woman or a 47 year old man to achieve the rocket bodies that they show during those ads. I agree if you believe that using your new Bow-Flex as a clothes hanger will give you an enviable physique. But if you start training hard, TODAY, and start eating properly, TODAY, and give up small instant gratifications in exchange for thinking of the big picture, you can achieve far beyond your wildest expectations. Did you know that training with weights builds muscle? And muscle is active living tissue, which uses calories, even while you sleep? The more muscle you have, the more you get to eat, and the more fat you can expect to lose. Training raises testosterone and growth hormone levels after each session, which in turn helps build muscle, lose fat, and improves your entire outlook on life. It's almost too good to be true, but it is that simple. And if you hate lifting weights, or are too social to do such a solitary activity, there are reputable, accredited trainers which

offer group training activities such as boot-camps and group circuit training classes for very reasonable rates.

If looking great and feeling good aren't enough motivation, this one should hit home for you fellow baby boomers. We've spent countless hours and thousands of dollars accumulating toys and merchandise in the hopes of enriching our lives. When we think of retirement, we dream of having the money to finally visit those exotic places we've seen pictures of. What fun will it be when we have to look at that beach from our hotel balcony because we're too scared to take our walkers and attempt that 200 meter journey from the mezzanine across the sand, and down to the water. Or to get to the beach and wear long sleeves and pants to cover up your entire body. Personally, I think that may be even worse than never having made the trip at all. All I'd be thinking about would be the fun I'd have if only my body were still able to do what my mind wanted to do so badly. I believe that aging gracefully means that we go down kicking and screaming, fighting off those symptoms of aging that most people accept as eventualities. We can win that battle, if we start fighting the war today.

Shawna Kaminski

Shawna is a long time teacher and personal trainer. You can see how she's 'shaking up' the programs of her clients at www.ShawnaKaminski.com or www.CalgaryNWBootCamp.com.