

# HEALTHY CHOICES-IT'S UP TO YOU

*“Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.”*

*Robert Collier*

Life is about choices, including the state of your health. Many will use their inherited genetics as an excuse for poor health, but studies show that genetics influence your health only about 25%. This means much of your good health, or lack of it, is based on lifestyle choices. Your mother was right about eating your vegetables and going outside to ‘play’.

Let’s discuss exercise. The quote by Robert Collier sums up how small choices, over time, can impact health over the long term. If you speak to anyone that has incorporated regular exercise into their daily routine, you may be surprised to hear that they aren’t revved up for each and every workout and sometimes they don’t have tons of energy or aren’t very enthusiastic. Nevertheless, they’ll do their workout, just the same. You may learn that they are pressed for time, yet they still get their training in, just the same. The pattern is obvious; healthy people, committed to exercise, get their workouts in, regardless of the circumstance. Period. Exercise is like brushing your teeth. You just get it done.

I’m not suggesting running a marathon everyday, or setting world records in the gym. Exercise looks different for everyone. There is no ‘one size fits all’. However, there are a few common fitness components that you need to keep in mind no matter where you are on your fitness journey:

Cardiovascular fitness: Heart disease and stroke risks can be reduced by implementing some type of cardiovascular conditioning. This simply means getting your heart pumping for at least 20 to 30 minutes three times per week. To calculate how hard you should work, use this formula: 220 minus your age to find your maximum heart rate, and then work up to 70% of your maximum heart rate for the duration of your exercise time. It’s all about intensity. To train your cardiovascular system, you need to challenge it and get out of breath.

Muscular strength and endurance: Warding off osteoporosis is one of the many benefits of resistance training. This can be as simple as adding some body weight exercises such as push ups, squats and planks to your routine. Many people will just ‘go jogging’ and feel they’ve done enough. Your muscular system moves your whole body, and for full benefit you must strengthen three areas: your upper body, lower body and core. And to help avoid adding pounds as you age, you must maintain lean muscle mass, which keeps your metabolism from slowing down. Resistance training can achieve all this.

Flexibility: Yoga or stretching type exercise should be practiced by everyone. If you have areas of your body that are chronically ‘tight’, over time you will notice aches and pains that seem to come out of no where. Adding some gentle stretching to all major joints and muscle groups will help to improve range of motion. You will discover that many injuries can be avoided by having a healthy range of motion in your joints. Functional fitness, that is, living daily life and getting your ‘chores’ done painlessly can be achieved by having strength and good flexibility.

By committing 45-60 minutes four or five times a week you can address all three areas of overall fitness. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program. You may decide you need to enlist the services of a professional trainer as well. Remember, you wouldn’t hand over your hard earned money to just anyone to invest it, similarly, you should also choose your personal fitness expert at least as carefully. Do your research and make informed decisions. Some are confident in heading down the road to fitness themselves, while some feel more

comfortable knowing a reputable company or person is there to help you along the way. Finding the right fitness class, boot camp or personal trainer is the same as finding a good investment adviser. Ensure you research your potential trainer and find one that has valid credentials, resonates with you and listens to your needs.

Finally, adding exercise to your routine is just one component of achieving good health. Whether weight loss, weight gain, or weight maintenance is your goal, you need to consider dietary modifications. Healthy food choices will amplify and accentuate your progress. You can't go wrong by eating lean proteins, complex carbohydrates, plenty of fruits and veggies and healthy fats. And it goes without saying that there is little to no room for junk food and processed food in a healthy diet.

Small healthy efforts made daily can amount to a clean bill of health, loads of energy and a brighter outlook on life. Look at your daily schedule and find one thing that you can change today. Once that becomes incorporated into how you live daily, implement another healthy change. Don't try to make huge sweeping changes all at once as you may become overwhelmed, setting yourself up for disappointment. Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.

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**Shawna is shaking up the fitness routines of several people in her Adventure Boot Camps. For more information, please visit her website.**