

10 steps for getting fit by Mike DeCinti

Last night on NBC, *The Biggest Loser* wrapped up its 5th season of helping people change their lives by finally getting healthy. Here's a small piece of what I wrote about the show nearly two years ago:

Rarely if ever, does a television program come around that actually helps save people's lives. Not only the contestants on the show, but those of us watching at home.

The show's concept is simple. Individuals who are not active, who eat very poorly and are extremely overweight, are invited to a ranch where they are given a personal trainer to show them how to eat and exercise and change their lives for the better. The reason people are watching this show is because the individuals on the ranch are just like us and they needed *someone* to believe in them, when they didn't even believe in themselves. They were obese and they had given up and this show taught them that if you make the decision to change, anything is possible. And they lost the weight and got in shape the correct way. No crash diets, no risky operations, just simple common sense and a strong desire to make their lives better for themselves and their families.

Now if you didn't watch the show I highly recommend that you look for season six, but until then check out their website at www.nbc.com/The_Biggest_Loser. It is filled with useful information that you can start following today, as well as testimonials from those who have succeeded on their own with the help of this program.

Here are 10 simple steps you may want to follow.

1. Don't fail to plan or you will plan to fail. Working out without a pre-determined workout regime is similar to going on a trip without directions; most likely you'll end up getting lost.
2. Don't compare yourself to others. Set realistic goals that will keep you motivated and concentrate on yourself, not others, throughout the process.
3. Too little exercise. Make sure that you are active in some fashion every day. In addition to workouts, increase activity by walking or biking to work, choose the parking space furthest away, or play with your kids. Be active and keep the body in motion on a regular basis.
4. Too much exercise. On the other hand, don't become obsessed with exercise that it begins to rule your life. Over-training is as detrimental to achieving fitness goals as doing nothing at all. Rest and recovery are vital for achieving gains and preventing burnout.
5. Change your workout routine. Nothing is as boring as the same routine over and over

again. Variety is necessary or progress will stop. Make every workout different in some way.

6. Don't starve to lose weight. When the body is not fed consistently, it flips into starvation mode and hangs onto fat content for survival. Five or six smaller meals every 2.5 to 3 hours make it easier for the body to digest throughout the day and increase metabolism. It may sound counterintuitive, but in order to burn fat you need to eat. Instead of reducing the amount of meals, control portion sizes.

7. Limit alcohol consumption. Just as portion sizes need to be controlled, alcohol consumption must be limited, if not eliminated. Not only does alcohol have calories; it is actually metabolized more like fat than carbohydrates.

8. Skip the fast food. The problem with regularly eating out is that despite how careful we may think we are, we truly don't know the makeup of most of the food that is being served to us. Even with fast food stores offering "healthier" choices, preparation of mass-produced meals relies on use of less than optimum ingredients and typically laden in fat.

9. Weight training. An important concern for weight loss is increasing the body's metabolism so caloric expenditure is increased throughout the day. One way to do this is to increase the percentage of muscle mass. The more muscle we carry on our frames, the more calories we burn.

10. Looking for the "easy way out." Whether it's winning the lottery or having the perfect body, we all want something for nothing. The main concept of weight loss, calories in vs. calories out, is simple but far from easy. Only with dedication, work, and healthy lifestyle changes are results going to happen. If it came in a bottle, we'd all have perfect bodies.

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