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HEALTHY LIVING

How to live longer and enjoy it more

OUR AMAZING BODIES

More than coincidence and goo

CANCER CASUALTY TO TRIATHLETE

A thriver's story

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E-mail: info@actmin.org

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Bramingham Pk. Business Ctr.
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+44 (0) 845 838 1384
E-mail: activatedEurope@activated.org

Activated Africa

P.O. Box 2150
Westville 3630
South Africa
+27 (83) 556 8213
E-mail: activatedAfrica@activated.org

Activated India

P.O. Box 5215
G.P.O.
Bangalore - 560 001
India
E-mail: activatedIndia@activated.org

Activated Philippines

P.O. Box 1147
Antipolo City P.O.
1870 Antipolo City
Philippines
E-mail: activatedPI@activated.org
Cel: (0922) 8125326



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Life is all about the choices we make, and our health is no exception. Even most health risks that seem unavoidable, like being exposed to the flu in a crowded elevator or hereditary predisposition to a certain type of cancer, aren't completely beyond our control. Often there is some precaution we can take to improve our chances of staying healthy, like using the stairs in flu season, or following a careful diet. The truth is, we could avoid most health problems, including that nasty flu, without going to extremes. In most cases, healthy living is a matter of consistently doing a few basic things to keep our bodies strong and our resistance high.

So why don't we take better care of ourselves, then? We each have our reasons, but they usually come down to "it's too hard" or "it takes too long." So we excuse ourselves by underestimating the danger and overestimating our strength. "I didn't catch the last thing that went around." "I'm in better shape than most people my age." "Surely that won't happen to me." But sooner or later it does happen, and we wish we'd made the effort or taken the time. Even if we just get run down and not actually sick, we operate at less than our full potential, which means we get less out of life and have less to give.

The good news, as usual, is that God is on our side. He's given us bodies that are remarkably resilient, with built-in early warning, defense, and healing mechanisms. He's also given us common sense, collective experience, and general guidelines in His Word for good health, and He's led men and women of science to make discoveries that fill in many details. But He hasn't stopped there. He wants to work with us one on one, to be our personal health and fitness coach. He's just waiting for us to ask Him, and then do our part.

Do you want to feel better, perform better, look better, and live longer? This special issue on health should get you on your way.

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

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EDITOR Keith Phillips
ILLUSTRATIONS Doug Calder
PRODUCTION Francisco Lopez

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LESS IS MORE

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

Your body is the baggage you must carry through life. The more excess baggage, the shorter the trip.—*E. Glasgow*

ONE DAY I WAS OUT AND SAW A NEW ELECTRONIC SCALE THAT TAKES A PERSON'S WEIGHT, correlates it with his or her height, and plots a graph that shows whether that person is underweight, the correct weight, overweight, or obese.

The people selling the scale were eager for me to try it, so I did. To my horror, the heartless thing pronounced me obese. OBESE! What were those slim, trim salespeople snickering at? I had a clear mental picture of what "obese" looked like, and I didn't fit it! Or did I?

When I got home, I considered the evidence. Yes, all of my trousers had become so tight that when I sat down, I had to loosen them at the waist. But at my age, I reasoned, it was normal to fill out a little. I went shopping for larger trousers, but when the first store didn't carry my new size, I was forced to face reality. As I reflected on the matter, I was reminded that the Bible says our bodies are "the temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19). If that were true, my temple was due for remodeling.

I read on the subject, and the solution seemed pretty straightforward. If I wanted to lose weight, I needed to eat less and exercise more.

Easier said than done. I like food, and as everyone knows, it is hard to give up something you like. The crux of my problem, I realized, was that even though I had reached middle age, my servings were still the size of a growing teen's. I didn't need to cut back on the enjoyment of eating, only the size of my meals.

My goal was to lose 25 kg (55 lb) in order to get back to the "normal zone." I invested in a scale and wrote

down my weekly progress, which encouraged me as I began to shed weight. My long-term goal is to keep that extra weight off. I also adopted a few slogans to keep me on track. "Eat to live; don't live to eat" helped me eat smaller portions. "It's okay to feel hungry" helped me break the habit of eating something the moment my stomach began to growl. "A day without panting is a day without progress" helped me fight the other giant—exercise. Getting in the daily exercise habit was hard at first, but eventually I began to look forward to it. "Healthy living means healthy lifestyle choices" reminded me that losing and then keeping the weight off would require a long-term commitment to eating better and exercising more.

A few months down the line I'm still a work in progress (15 kg off—10 more to go), but I feel much better now that I'm carrying less "luggage."

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST. ■

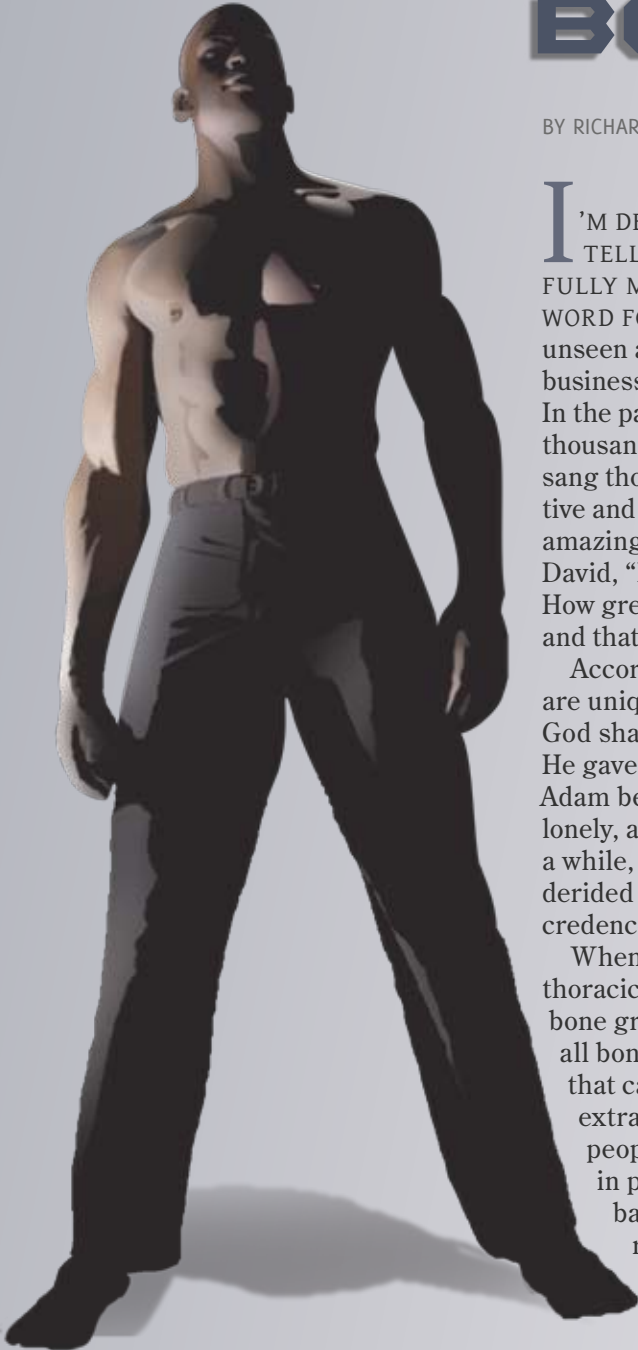
RUMINATIONS ON OUR AMAZING BODIES

BY RICHARD JOHNSTON

I'M DECIDEDLY SQUEAMISH, SO WHEN THE PSALMIST TELLS ME THAT I AM "FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE" (PSALM 139:14), I'M INCLINED TO TAKE HIS WORD FOR IT. Let what goes on beneath my skin remain unseen and largely forgotten, I say, while I go about my business in blissful ignorance. Not everyone is so inclined. In the past two or three hundred years—about three thousand years after ancient Israel's awestruck King David sang those praises to his Creator—some more inquisitive and decidedly less squeamish types have made some amazing discoveries that give us reason to exclaim with David, "How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well" (Psalm 139:17,14).

According to the Bible's book of Genesis, we humans are unique in that we were created in God's own image. God shaped the first man from a pile of dust, and when He gave that inanimate figure the kiss of life—*voilà!*—Adam became a living soul. Realizing that Adam would be lonely, and finding that he had a rib that he could spare for a while, God took a rib and made Eve. Skeptics have long derided that account, but modern medicine gives it some credence.

When an accident victim needs reconstructive surgery, thoracic (chest) surgeons routinely remove ribs to use for bone grafting. The periosteum is a membrane that covers all bone surfaces except at joints, and it contains cells that can manufacture new bone. Rib periosteum has an extraordinary ability to regenerate, especially in young people. When a rib is removed, leaving the periosteum in place and as intact as possible, the rib often grows back, as Adam's may have. A major reason why the rib is the ideal situation for such regeneration is that the attached intercostal muscles provide it with a good blood supply. God's pretty smart.



Our bodies have many other features that are tributes to our Creator's forethought and ingenuity. Here is a small sampling:

- The human skeleton is a dynamic, flexible, self-maintaining framework of bone and cartilage with hinges and joints. To cut down harmful friction, the body lubricates itself by manufacturing a jelly-like substance at each place it is needed.
- The body has an amazingly complex and efficient chemical plant that changes the food we eat into living tissue. It not only causes the growth of flesh, blood, bones, and teeth, but it also has a remarkable ability to repair itself when parts are damaged by accident or disease.
- The human body has an automatic thermostat that takes care of both our heating and cooling systems, keeping body temperature at about 36.8°C (98.6°F). A tiny device within the hypothalamus in the brain sends a regular signal about ideal body temperature to another part of the brain that compares that to messages it receives from other parts of the body about its actual temperature. If the body is found to be too hot, a message is sent to yet another control center in the brain that tells sweat glands to carry moisture to the surface of the skin. Latent heat is lost as the sweat evaporates, which has a cooling effect. The process is augmented by a second message to expand the blood vessels in the skin, which brings more overheated blood closer to the surface. That “flushed” look is a sign that the body is flushing extra heat. However, if the temperature control center

determines that the body is too cold, messages are sent to shrink the blood vessels, which moves more blood away from the skin to reduce surface heat loss, causing a pale or “blue” look. Meanwhile, muscles are instructed to vibrate to generate warmth; the body shivers, but it begins to warm up.

- We are able to detect and differentiate sounds thanks to a tiny, intricate instrument inside the ear. Sound waves go down the auditory canal, and are converted to vibrations by the eardrum. Now in the middle ear, the vibrations are picked up by the ossicles (the three tiniest, most delicate bones in the body), and passed along to the cochlea, or inner ear, which is rolled up like a tiny sea shell and is filled with liquid. The vibrations set the liquid in wave-like motion that is detected by microscopic hairs, also in the cochlea, creating nerve signals that the brain understands as sound and interprets.
- The heart pumps blood through tens of thousands of miles of blood vessels, carrying food and oxygen to every part of the body. The blood vessels are not only remarkably flexible and durable, but arteries have a slight corkscrew twist to their interior walls that allows the blood to flow more easily than it would through straight pipes. The smoother the flow of blood, the less strain it puts on the heart. That's a small but important extra, considering that heart will need to pump an average of about six liters (one and half gallons) of blood every minute for a lifetime.

Werner Gitt, a former professor at Germany's Federal Institute of Physics and Technology, wrote: “Without a doubt, the most complex information-processing system in existence is the human body.” He estimated that the total information that each of our bodies deals with each day—all the information involved in conscious processes such as language and voluntary movements, plus the information used in the unconscious functions of the organs and various systems—is about 10^{24} bits. To put this astronomically high figure in more relatable terms, that's about one million times greater than the total human knowledge stored in all the world's libraries.

We are wonderfully made indeed!

(THE AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGES THE WRITINGS OF JOSEPH PATURI AND CARL WIELAND AS SOURCES FOR THIS ARTICLE.) ■

HEALTHY LIVING

BY MARIA FONTAINE

Staying healthy doesn't happen automatically; it takes both conscious and physical effort. It also usually involves some sacrifice, some reordering of priorities and forgoing certain things that would be enjoyable but not good for us. Long-term health is a lifelong investment, but it's the wise thing to do. Better to invest a little each day in strengthening our bodies than to neglect them and suffer serious health problems.

In health matters, as with many other things in life, God won't do for us what we can and should do ourselves. He expects us to take care of our bodies, and He usually won't override the negative consequences when we could have made healthier choices but didn't.

Ground rules

We're either building up or tearing down our health daily, according to our choices. There are a host of little things that we do each day, often without really thinking about them, which add up and make a big difference in our current and long-term health.

Thankfully, God has laid out some pretty straightforward rules for staying healthy. These fall into three main categories: spiritual, emotional, and physical. The key to the spiritual aspect is in staying right with Him, in finding and following His plan for our lives as best we can. The key to the emotional aspect is in maintaining a positive attitude, which reduces stress, worry, fear, and other negative emotions, all of which take a toll on our health and happiness. The physical aspect is pretty much summed up in "Eat right, sleep right, exercise right." Some health experts refer to these as the three pillars of physical health.

"Eat right" comes down to following a few fairly simple guidelines (see "Eat Right"

Made Simple on page 8)—simple, but not always easy. Changing poor eating habits takes determination and planning, but you'll probably be surprised at how quickly you develop an appetite for the right kinds of food and lose your appetite for the wrong ones.

"Sleep right" may sound easy enough, but many people these days try to operate with a sleep deficit. It's true that some people need less sleep than others and that most of us need less sleep as we get older, but the real and perceived pressures of modern living push many of us to try to pack more into our days by sleeping less than the seven or eight hours our bodies need to be in top health. That's being short-sighted, because we get more out of our waking hours when we're rested. Plenty of sound, restful sleep stimulates the production and release of the hormone that combats aging.

For people who aren't in the habit of exercising regularly, that is easy to neglect. It's hardest to dismiss the need for sleep, because the effects of trying to go without sleep are felt immediately. On the other hand, much like the effects of a poor diet, the bad effects of insufficient exercise can be slower in coming, but without a doubt they will come. Exercise keeps our bodies capable of cleansing and repairing themselves. It also strengthens muscles, bones, and internal organs,

and boosts our immune systems. There is scarcely a living cell in our bodies that doesn't benefit from the right kind of exercise on a regular basis.

The physical/spiritual connection

Even despite our best efforts, we're bound to get sick sometimes. Sickness is a natural part of life. Putting the physical aspect aside, sickness is something God sometimes uses to strengthen us spiritually, because when we're weak, we're more likely to turn to Him for help and thereby be strengthened in spirit and character. When that happens, sickness can actually be the best thing for us at the time.

Usually, however, God wants us to be healthy and will do all He can to make it so. About the hardest thing for Him to protect us from, it seems, is ourselves. Sometimes we bring sickness upon ourselves by our choices, particularly choices to disregard His health rules. He is all-powerful, but He usually allows nature to run its course. Those are the times when, even though He can still bring some good out of that sickness, we suffer unnecessarily. He hopes, of course, that we will learn from the mistake and not repeat it.

If we're doing our part to stay healthy by eating right, sleeping right, exercising right, and not overdoing in

Staying Healthy

1. The Spiritual Aspect



2. The Emotional Aspect



3. The Physical Aspect



other areas, and we still get sick, we can be sure that God has allowed it for some good reason, to accomplish a specific purpose or to teach us some other lesson. We should always ask Him about it in prayer, because when we have His perspective, we're not only in a much better position to correct the underlying problem, but once we get that

squared away with Him, we can have more faith when we ask Him to heal us.

Personalized program

The ground rules are universal, but because of the aging process and because body types and personal preferences vary greatly, what will work best also varies from person to person. Each person's needs also change over time and as other factors enter in. So how do you know what's right for you? Many "authorities" offer conflicting information

and advice, and sometimes a certain kind of diet or exercise is widely acclaimed for a time, but discredited later. Whose program do you follow? Only your Creator truly knows what's best for you, and He wants to work with you toward optimum health.

One way He has of speaking to you is through your body, so learn to listen to it. For example, that soreness that gets a little worse each day could be a sign of overdoing or not performing an exercise correctly; avoid injury by switching to another form of exercise until the soreness goes away and you've corrected what you were doing wrong.

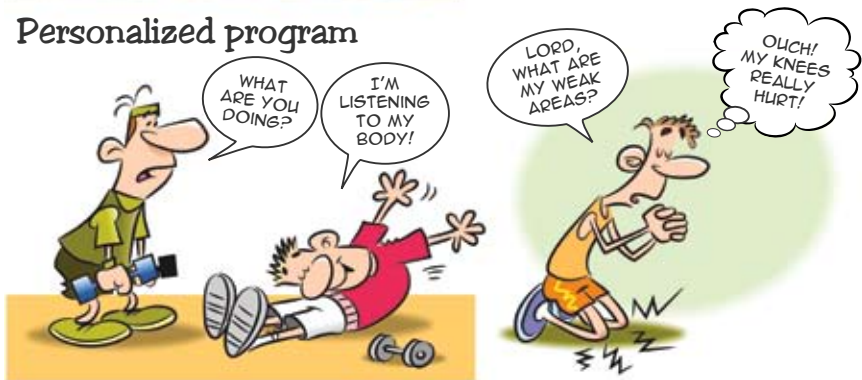
God will also give you personalized counsel when you take your questions to Him in prayer. He doesn't normally speak in an audible voice, but He can and will put thoughts in your mind or give you intuitive knowledge. For example, if you have a weak area—your knees, let's say—He can suggest forms of exercise that don't exacerbate the problem, while working to strengthen that area gradually. He may speak directly to your mind, or He may lead you to the information you need and show you how to apply it.

*(Editor's note: If you would like to learn more about how to receive answers from God, order the booklet *Hearing from Heaven* from one of the addresses on page 2.)*

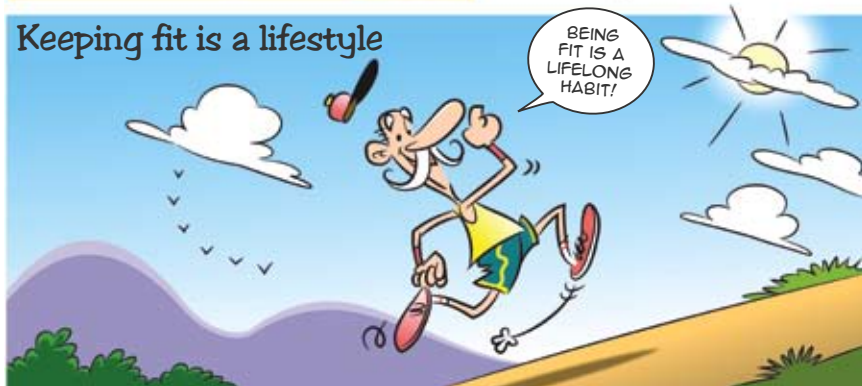
The physical/spiritual connection



Personalized program



Keeping fit is a lifestyle



Keeping fit is a lifestyle

The goal should be to make getting a proper diet, sleep, and exercise lifelong habits—not just something we do for a few days or a few weeks until we lose a few inches from our waist or drop a dress size or two. Unless we correct the bad habits that brought on those extra inches, they will soon be back. This is why diets and

exercise programs that promise quick results are largely unsuccessful: They focus on the short-term instead of lifestyle choices that bring long-term changes. In some cases, you might need to undertake a short-term program to get healthier or lose weight, but then you need to build new long-term health habits if you want to hold on to the ground you've gained.

If you're serious about switching to a healthier lifestyle, the first questions to ask are: "How can I make eating, sleeping, and exercising right my daily norms? What changes do I need

"EAT RIGHT" MADE SIMPLE

Eat a balanced diet—carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins, minerals, and fiber, in the correct proportions.

Eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, including raw vegetables.

Eat whole grains, rather than refined ones (brown rice or foods made from whole wheat flour, for example, as opposed to polished rice and foods made from white flour).

Get protein from a variety of sources, such as beans, whole grains, nuts, fish, eggs, dairy, poultry, and meat. (Meat and poultry are often not as healthy as they used to be, due to how livestock and poultry are being raised.)

Prepare your food in a healthy way. Some general guidelines are: Keep foods as close to their natural state as possible, and minimize the use of processed additives.

Choose natural, fresh, whole foods over refined, processed, and artificially enhanced foods, when possible.

Severely limit intake of sugar, and avoid white sugar and sugar substitutes. Use (or choose products that use) raw sugar (unbleached/unrefined) or honey.

to make in my mindset or lifestyle?" and, "What specific program is best for me?"

Replacing poor health habits with good ones takes determination, study, and planning at first, but the payoff in greater vitality soon makes it self-sustaining; we feel so much better that we want to keep doing the things that make us feel that way. ■



cancer casualty to **TRIATHLETE**

BY AARON BERG

IN JANUARY OF 2002, I WAS DIAGNOSED WITH STAGE 3 METASTATIC MELANOMA CANCER. The survival rate for people who reach this stage of the disease is less than 50%. Over half die within five years.

What would be a difficult prospect for anyone to face was nearly overwhelming for me. I was still in my 20s and the father of four young children. Faith in God is what kept my wife Iona and me from slipping into despair or succumbing to fear over what the future might hold.

Over the next two years I underwent four surgeries. I also had three months of immunotherapy—three months of living hell that turned me into a semi-invalid with its terrible flu-like side effects and destruction of muscle tissue. By the end, I could barely climb a single flight of stairs.

Iona and I asked Jesus to show His miracle-working power by delivering me from the cancer, as well as from the symptoms of manic depression that

were setting in as a result of the treatments. In response to requests for additional prayer that we circulated among our friends and over the Internet, hundreds of people all around the world also prayed for me.

At my lowest point, I asked Jesus for a special miracle: not only to be healed of the cancer—which eventually I was—but for a stronger body and better fitness than I had ever had before. I set as my goal competing in a triathlon—an endurance sport involving back-to-back swimming, cycling, and long-distance running.

After one and a half years of extensive research on how to rebuild my body and intense physical training, I got my chance. In 2004, in my first Olympic-distance triathlon—1600 meters (1 mile) swimming, 40 km (25 miles) cycling, and 10 km (6 miles) running—I placed 11th out of over 200 in my age category.

Since then, I have competed in many events, presently ranking among the top multi-sport athletes in this country. But more important, in answer to my specific prayer, I have enjoyed a level of health and fitness that I only dreamed of before. As Jesus has encouraged me to do, I also use my newfound health to bring hope to others who face life-threatening health problems like I did.

I have started a sports team called Team Live Right, which participates in various races and events to promote healthy living and raise awareness for cancer prevention. I now travel, giving seminars and motivational talks to encourage others to strive to reach their full potential.

I have Jesus to thank for my recovery and a new life! No problem is too difficult for Him to take care of when we take it to Him in prayer. “Life is short. LIVE RIGHT!”

AARON BERG IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN TAIWAN. VISIT THE TEAM LIVE RIGHT WEBSITE AT WWW.TEAMLIVERIGHT.COM ■



being me

BY THERESA LECLERC

“YOU’RE GOING TO BE SO PRETTY WHEN YOU GROW UP,” I remember people telling me when I was a little girl. Oh, how I waited for that day! All of my dreams would come true. I would be beautiful!

But at 15 I was nothing like I had imagined. I was chunky and hated my body. I wore only black clothes to try to make myself look thinner. I also wore a lot of makeup that became a mask to hide behind. I remember crying and being incredibly depressed because I thought I was so fat I didn’t deserve to live. It’s easy to see how ridiculous such thoughts are when it’s others who are thinking them, but when you’re the one, it’s a different story.

I started dieting at 12 and kept at it till I was 17. In spite of all my parents did to encourage me and keep me from going

to extremes, I would starve myself, then binge, then have horrible bouts of guilt for not sticking to whatever incredibly rigid diet I had put myself on that month. Instead of the diets working for me, my metabolism just became very slow, and I would gain weight by eating the smallest amounts of food. I went through a bulimic phase, but thankfully that didn’t last long.

I had a terrible image of my body and couldn’t imagine ever being happy till I was thin, but for me that was impossible. The more I tried, the more I failed; and the more I failed, the more depressed I became.

Once I decided to go on a starvation diet, and my younger sister decided to join me. We secretly starved ourselves for 10 days and finally became so weak that all we could do was lie in our beds. Thankfully that diet didn’t last any longer than that and wasn’t repeated.

One day, after three months of an exceptionally tough diet and an overly intense three-times-a-day exercise routine, I stepped on the scale and my heart sank. I hadn’t lost a pound. I was out of ideas and at the end of my rope. My desire to lose weight had become an obsession, a nightmare, an insane, vicious cycle where I kept trying to gain control but couldn’t.

Finally I was fed up. I tried eating whatever I wanted, but I’d abused my body so badly for so long through extreme diets that it took some time before my metabolism stabilized.

You can either hold yourself up to the unrealistic standards of others, or ignore them and concentrate on being happy with yourself as you are.—*Jeph Jacques*

Then a thought came to me. What if I acted like I thought I was a cool person, just the way I was? Maybe other people would think so too. What would happen if I wasn't always obsessing over my weight? Sure I was chunky, but I liked chubby people. Maybe others would like me if I accepted myself. I determined to not talk about my weight or dieting in front of others. Why draw more attention to it? Who knows? Maybe they wouldn't even notice. This may sound like a dumb idea, but it actually worked.

Around that time my family moved. The next several years were some of my chubbiest, but they were also the source of some of my fondest memories. In new surroundings I made a lot of friends, and the boys seemed to like me more. Suddenly people thought I was really cool. I couldn't believe it!

The decision to just be me was one of the best decisions I ever made, because ever since then I have been able to think a lot more positively about myself. Even though I knew my "flaws," I never let myself dwell on them. I made a conscious effort to only think good things about myself, and after a while I started doing that subconsciously.

I eventually lost a lot of my teen chubbiness, but I never became slim. At 27, I'm a lot more comfortable with myself. Plus I see that there are more important things in life than my weight. I may never look like a cover girl, I'll always be me, but I

might as well be the best me I can be! I'm going to keep on being happy just as God made me.

If you feel like you've been handed a raw deal, you're not alone. But consider this: Today you can decide where you're going to go from here. Are you going to complain, or worse yet, beat yourself up about the way the Creator of the universe chose to make you? Have you ever considered that He handpicked your features? Maybe you don't like them, but He sure does! In His eyes you are perfectly made. Choose to think positively about yourself, and you can change your life forever.

THERESA LECLERC IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SOUTH AFRICA. ■

DIET RIGHT

Diets that promise rapid weight loss and/or weight loss without exercise are not only nearly always futile, but they actually damage the body by tearing down lean tissue. A healthy weight-loss plan combines a balanced diet, a small calorie deficit, and exercise. The math and plan are both simple: Burn 500 more calories per day than you consume (by eating 300 fewer calories and burning 200 more by exercising for 30–40 minutes, for example), and you will lose one pound (0.45 kg) per week, which is the optimum rate for long-term weight loss. Combine that with resistance (weight-bearing) exercise, and you will burn fat, not muscle. That's the secret to safe, sane, successful dieting.

you'll find me *running*

BY LILY NEVE



ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO IT DAWNED ON ME THAT I WAS SERIOUSLY OUT OF SHAPE. My work had become more sedentary, and I hadn't made up for that. I enjoyed exercise, but never seemed to find the time or motivation to stick with it, day after day. Part of the problem, I realize now, was that I put accomplishments in my work ahead of my health.

Then I read a newspaper article about the local annual marathon. Perfect! There was a goal to strive for, a reason to exercise. I'd train hard and enter next year's marathon.

My "training program" consisted of running as hard as I could, till I was completely breathless, walking till I caught my breath, and then running as hard as I could again. Over and over. After about 40 minutes of that, I would go home and collapse. It felt good to finally be getting some exercise, but after a while I noticed that I wasn't making any progress.

I figured I needed some professional help, so I got online and found a few websites dedicated to running. Some were informative, some overwhelming. Most encouraged me to invest in things that were out of my reach, such as expensive gear and gadgets or a personal trainer.

Even more daunting was the concept of consistent, long-term training. Expert

after expert wrote, "Start slowly, build up slowly, but do something every day." I'm more of a go-for-quick-results person. Long-term projects—*argh!*—those drove me nuts. Witnessing my own reaction to this approach to exercise helped me realize how that attitude affected other areas of my life. Important things were going undone because they required small steps repeated over time. Meanwhile, the only people who *really* ran marathons or became fit or reached their life goals were those who worked up to it slowly, day after day, over time. I determined to make that change, starting with my exercise. I began slow, tried to pace myself, and told that ugly "What good will this little bit do?" voice in my mind to shut up.

About that time I also read a fantastic article on healthy living that emphasized bringing spiritual power into the health and fitness equation. I started praying more, asking God not only for His help to make progress in my running, but also for His guidance in knowing how to go about it. Dragging myself out of bed earlier wasn't going to happen, but I did have a little flexibility in my work schedule, so I came home a little earlier and ran.

At first it was at a slower pace and not for as long as I would have liked, but I tried to do it every day. Each day I could run a little farther in the allotted time, and I began to really enjoy it. I also found that I had more energy.

At one point a flu knocked me for a loop. Even after the fever left, the fatigue remained for several weeks. When I was finally strong enough to resume my daily runs, I figured that the level of fitness I had worked up to in the previous months had been undone completely. All that time and effort lost! I didn't even want to try, and kept procrastinating. Maybe tomorrow.

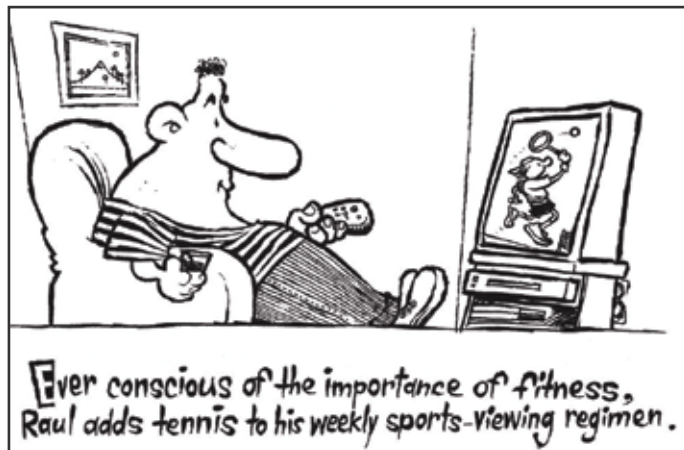
One day I tossed my excuses out the window. I would just take it slow and easy, and see how far I got. To my surprise, I was at about 75% compared to what I had been able to do before my illness. All my hard work *hadn't* been in vain. What's more, as I ran, I started to feel better. Breathing deeply, running through fields and beautiful places surrounding my home, was invigorating. I think that was the day I realized I loved running. Fitness was a worthwhile goal, and the thought of running in a marathon had given me the incentive to get started, but the day-to-day *doing* was great fun in itself.

As I ran, I thought about other things that I'd been putting off because they required the same planning and pacing, plugging away day by day. The joy was in the running, in doing what I could each day to keep fit and healthy, to stay connected with family and loved ones, and to make progress in my work.

I also learned to use those times of relative solitude while I was running to not only think things over, but to pray about them. Now, as I start to run, I tell Jesus about whatever problems I may be facing. Sometimes He gives me solutions—things I hadn't thought of myself and probably never would have—and other times just telling Him about them helps relieve the stress. I also use that time to pray for other people and situations, which is another thing I've felt the need to do more of, but couldn't find the time for. By the time I get home, the weights seem to have been left along the road somewhere.

I may never run that marathon, but toward the end of each day, you'll find me running.

LILY NEVE IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN SOUTH ASIA. ■



FEEDING READING

Bible keys to good health

Obey God's rules for spiritual health.

Exodus 15:26

Deuteronomy 4:40

Proverbs 4:20,22

Eat right.

Leviticus 10:10

Psalm 103:5

Proverbs 23:20-21

Proverbs 25:16

Exercise right.

Proverbs 21:25

Proverbs 31:17

Sleep right.

Psalm 4:8

Psalm 127:2

Ecclesiastes 5:12a

Don't overdo in any area.

1 Corinthians 9:25

Philippians 4:5a

Maintain positive relations with others.

Proverbs 16:24

Proverbs 27:9

Proverbs 27:17

Maintain a positive outlook.

Proverbs 17:22

Proverbs 18:14

Philippians 4:8

Maintain a right relationship with God.

Proverbs 4:23

Isaiah 40:29-31

Malachi 4:2a

Q: I want to get in better shape, but don't know where to start. How much exercise is enough? What type of exercise is best, and how much time do I need to spend on it?

A: The answers to those questions depend on a number of factors, including your age, general health, present fitness level, and metabolism. There are, however, a few general guidelines for a successful exercise program.

- Find one or more forms of exercise that you enjoy, because then you're more likely to stick with it.
- Start slow, with modest goals, and build up gradually. You can't become fit from one day to the next. Expecting too much too soon is likely to result in injury and discouragement.
- Your program should combine cardiovascular exercise* to strengthen the respiratory system with resistance exercise** to strengthen muscles and bones.
- It needs to be regular (at least four times a week).
- It needs to be for an extended period of time (build up to 40–60 minutes).
- It needs to be vigorous enough to get your heart pumping and make you break a sweat.
- Warm up at the beginning of your exercise routine, and cool down at the end.
- Inform yourself. Understand the benefits and potential risks of the specific exercises you'd like to do. Get your information from respected sources, shy away from sources that advocate extremes, and balance the advice given by several sources, when possible.
- Have a plan. Choose your forms of exercise, make a realistic plan, and stick to it.
- Change your routine from time to time. Your body adapts to any form of exercise over time, and then that exercise loses some of its benefits.

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Starting an exercise program

- If you are over 40, seriously overweight or out of shape, or suffering from a medical condition, consult your doctor before starting on a new exercise program.

* Cardiovascular exercise, also called aerobic exercise or “cardio” for short, is any activity that gets your heart beating at 60-80% of its maximum rate for a period of time—at least 20 minutes, as a general rule. To calculate your maximum heart rate on the safe side, subtract your age from 220.

** Resistance exercise is any activity that brings weight to bear on your muscles, bones, and joints by means of weight-training equipment (barbells, dumbbells, weight machines, etc.) or body weight (pushups, pull-ups, sit-ups, etc.). Resistance exercise is even more important when you get older and bone and muscle loss occur naturally, if not combated. Choose exercises that target each major muscle group once or twice each week. Unless you have special needs or are an amateur or professional bodybuilder, three 20- to 30-minute routines each week is enough to strengthen bones and tone muscles. ■

The people who say they don't have time to take care of themselves will soon discover they're spending all their time being sick.—*Patricia Alexander*

Breathe deep

A spiritual exercise

God is like the air we breathe—all around us, invisible, and vital to our health and happiness. Just as we need to breathe clean, fresh air to be strong and healthy physically, we need to partake of God's Spirit to be strong and healthy spiritually. Under normal circumstances, breathing is an unconscious, involuntary act. God would like our relationship with Him to be that natural, and He created us with all the necessary equipment. But unlike breathing, for most of us, making that connection with God doesn't come so easily; it requires a conscious effort on our part. Actually, it's easier than it seems, and with a little practice it becomes even easier. Try this:

Go outside, preferably to a natural setting. Take long, deep breaths. Imagine that you are inhaling God's energy, light, love, and peace. Then exhale slowly and imagine that you are expelling stress, worries, negative feelings, or whatever may be troubling you. Look around at God's creation, and continue to breathe deeply as you think about His infinite love and care. Turn your worries and concerns over to Him, and thank Him in advance for working everything out.

A few minutes of that and you will feel rejuvenated. ■



faith factor

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

Fear, tension, and hatred all produce various psychological and nervous diseases. Physiological diseases like heart trouble, arthritis, and stomach ulcers can also be made worse by worry, fear, bitterness, hatred, or a negative attitude toward life. Science has proved that all of these negative attitudes and feelings can cause an actual buildup of poisons in the body that contribute to illnesses. In other words, the wrong state of mind can actually poison your body.

That is why faith is such a marvelous cure. Knowing that your heavenly Father loves you and is going to take care of you and yours eliminates fear and gives you peace of mind, contentment of heart, and a feeling of spiritual well-being that brings rest to your vital organs, and that in turn actually causes the elimination of poisons from your body. Faith in God's love is the best medicine! ■

BELLY BREATHING

“Slow, deep breathing is probably the single best anti-stress medicine we have,” says James Gordon, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the Georgetown University School of Medicine. “When you bring air down into the lower portion of the lungs, where oxygen exchange is most efficient, everything changes. Heart rate slows, blood pressure decreases, muscles relax, anxiety eases, and the mind calms. [Belly breathing] is extremely therapeutic.”

Deep diaphragmatic breathing has also been found to significantly reduce symptoms of severe PMS, as well as relieve anxiety, depression, and other forms of emotional distress, end heart arrhythmias, improve digestion, increase blood circulation, and improve sleep and energy cycles.

The abdomen should expand during inhalation to provide the optimum amount of oxygen needed to nourish all the cells in the body.

from Jesus with love



abundant health

The human body is a very versatile, adaptable, durable, intricate, and highly developed creation, made so to encase the yet more beautiful and durable spirit inside. The apostle Paul called your body the “temple of God” (1 Corinthians 3:16–17), and so it is. Only the spirit lasts for eternity, but its fleshly “temple” is meant to last a long, healthy lifetime.

You were created in such a way that you have a part to play in keeping your body strong and healthy. Through its care, you show respect to your Creator. The biblical principle that you reap what you sow is true and very much applies to your health. It’s easy in your youth in particular to dismiss this fact, to feel that it doesn’t really matter that much and maybe isn’t true for you. You may be able to get by for a time with that attitude without feeling its effects, but sooner or later there is always a price to pay for such neglect. Those who are wise strive to stay in optimum health and peak fitness; they give their body the best they can, so it will run well and last as long as possible.

As I told My first disciples, “I have come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Part of the abundance I want you to have is the blessing of a strong, healthy body. It is a gift, but it also requires your cooperation. As you do your part, I will bless you with good health.