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# Move it to lose it

**A**s we begin the second half of 2009, I'd like to invite you to make a midyear resolution — one you can actually keep. Why? Well, next to "quitting smoking," starting to exercise is the most common New Year's resolution that people make — and break.

The first of the year, health clubs and gyms are packed; by Valentine's day, it's easy to get on any machine and by Easter, you pretty much have the place to yourself. By July 4th, most people have abandoned their efforts to be healthy. In my business, we see this pattern year after year.

Albert Einstein said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." So, unless we want to feel crazy and out of shape, it's time to try something different.

Let's start by looking at the behavioral science of change. Often our clients set their goals too high and become discouraged when they don't accomplish their objectives within a few months. It's not that they don't want to change; it's that their goals require them to change a lifetime of behavioral patterns overnight.

So instead setting a reasonable goal and achieving some positive result, they end up feeling like nothing they do makes a difference. In this way, people's hopes and goals are doomed before they even get started.

**HEALTHY BOTTOM LINE**



**Mick Bates**

Next, let's consider exercise. Bottom line? Move it to lose it. And yet research indicates that about a quarter of the population is essentially sedentary and does little (or no) physical activity. Only a third of us gets anywhere near the recommended amount of exercise which is a moderate amount every day and a vigorous amount three times a week that involves all parts of the body and a variety of activities. Our bodies are designed to move; it's a natural thing for us to do. Any movement or activity is good for us.

The difference between activity and exercise is simply a matter of intensity and duration. If, for example, we do an activity at a intensity level that's hard enough to become short of breath for at least 20 minutes, then it counts as exercise. But, just as we need to crawl before we walk, we should start with activity — trying to walk before we try to run.

Exercise can be put into three broad categories. Cardio-vascular exercises increase the demand on the heart and lungs and improve "wind" or endurance. Resistance exercises use weights to strengthen trunk, arm, or leg muscles and increase baseline metabolic rate. Flexibility exercises stretch and bend our bodies to increase pliability and elasticity so we can reach, bend, and do all the things we want to do. Each of these options are important to consider when developing an effective exercise "prescription."

## BATES

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The truth is this — it matters less what we do than that we make the time to do something physical. Making the time and deciding to move is the real starting point. These commitments are more important than the specific type of movement or exercise we choose. But keep in mind that starting too hard or too fast only sets us up for failure in the future.

So here's your challenge. Today, commit to 15 minutes of doing something active, something physical. Tomorrow, get started. You could begin with taking a walk, gardening, stretching, or playing with the kids — just pick one. Then choose a time of day that will consistently fit with your daily routine. Perhaps you can borrow 15 minutes from a sedentary

activity like watching TV or reading. (You could decide to move while watching the news or 15 minutes of your favorite show.)

Over the course of the next month, try adding an additional 15 minutes — until you find yourself being active for a minimum of 30 minutes each day. This is a simple, reasonable strategy that will produce positive, motivating results! If you are already more active than most, applaud yourself and consider how you could do a bit more to be even healthier and happier.

Next month, I'll offer some tips to design an effective exercise program so you can make the most of the 30 minutes you've committed to.

What will you do this month to start to make your bottom line healthier?

— Bates owns and operates BODYWORKS in Beckley.



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