

APPENDIX A: Initial exercise handout

(The text was taken from various websites, including

www.onlineambulance.com/articles/doc/15/grp/Sport/art/Fav_Exerciseisgood.htm

and www.buildingbodiesfitness.com/)

Please read the following essay

The importance of exercising

Exercise is good for your body, but did you know that exercise is also good for your mind?

Research has shown that regular exercise delivers a mental and emotional boost. It improves your mood, bolsters your self-esteem and gives you the confidence to handle whatever comes your way. Some studies hint that it also enhances the functioning of your brain.

Your Body's Medicine Cabinet

When you are physically active your body releases chemicals known as endorphins. These are your body's natural painkillers and stress reducers. They diminish anxiety and depression and produce a sense of well being known as the exercise "high."

Just one workout can release another cache of natural antidepressant chemicals from your body's medicine cabinet, such as dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine.

A study at Duke University found that intense bouts of exercise are every effective in reducing feelings of depression, tension, anger and confusion.

Meanwhile, a host of other studies have shown that even short spurts of moderate exercise can improve your outlook on life and make you less anxious. Whether you take a brisk ten-minute walk, do a few jumping jacks, or bicycle around the block, you will feel the benefit both physically and emotionally.

Stress Buster

Chronic stress releases a number of different chemicals and hormones into your body that raise blood pressure, weaken your immunity to colds and illness, impair your memory, increase fat cell storage, and lead to depression.

Regular physical activity has been shown to be an effective stress buster and successful weapon against its debilitating effects. The set of beneficial chemicals and hormones released during exercise are an important arsenal that can defeat the negative chemicals created by stress.

Canadian researchers discovered that depressed people experienced significantly less depression after exercising for anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour, three times a week for five weeks. In some cases the benefits lasted up to one year. It is important to note however, that severe cases of depression require medical review and a combination of treatments.

In another study, a team of Australian researchers compared people who practiced progressive-relaxation techniques with a group who did 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week. It was the exercise group that had lower blood pressure and responded best to acute stress.

A Boost to Self-esteem

How we feel directly affects how we use our bodies and how we look. Feelings of distress or doubt can cause us to hunch our bodies in an effort at self-protection. As a result our spines are compressed and our breathing is shallow. We limit ourselves to small movements leading our muscles and joints to stiffen and weaken. It is no wonder that our spirits might sag and our sense of self-esteem drop through the floor.

Often just starting out on a new exercise program can boost your sense of self-worth. As you find yourself progressing, you'll also find your confidence growing. Choose physical activities that stretch and strengthen. They will help you to physically stand taller, feel better, and face the world with a positive outlook.

Time Out

Like many leisure activities such as meditation or your favorite hobby, exercise gives your mind needed time out from everyday thoughts, worries and responsibilities. You return to your life refreshed, invigorated, and perhaps even mentally sharper.

By improving the flow of blood and consequently of oxygen and nutrients to your brain, it may be that aerobic exercise helps you to think better.

Regular weight training and aerobic exercise have been shown in several studies to impart an additional benefit. They can improve the quality and duration of sleep. A good night's rest can make you less fatigued and better able to function in your daily life.

A Little Bit Can Go a Long Way

A great deal of research continues to be done on the mental and emotional effects of physical activity. A recent study found that after several subjects spent 30 minutes on a treadmill, they scored 25 percent lower on tests that measure anxiety as well as demonstrated positive changes in their brain activity.

A brisk walk, a short jog, or even just several stretches during your day can help relieve stress and improve your outlook on life. Regular physical exercise releases a host of beneficial chemicals that can help you feel physically fit, mentally sharp, and emotionally positive. Find a physical activity you enjoy and give yourself a dose of good health every day. Stay fit and stay happy.

Staying motivated

One way to stay motivated is to constantly remind yourself that a worth-while pay-off lies ahead; a new, healthy, strong you is emerging. Effective, consistent exercise will not only improve your overall health and fitness, but will also improve your appearance, energy level, and social interactions. Also, look forward to the many psychological benefits as well: confidence, self-esteem, and relief from depression, anxiety and stress.

If you are serious about your health and well-being, you will take action and begin an exercise program, and you will benefit in all these ways. Once you see the results, you will become even more motivated. Action creates motivation!

Set Goals

Goal-setting is another great way of staying motivated. Goals focus your workout program and clarify what you are trying to achieve. As you attain each goal, you gain encouragement and further motivation. Here is how to achieve the goals you set and obtain the results you deserve.

- 1. Make sure your goals are measurable:* A vague goal, such as "I want to be fit," gives you nothing to shoot for. Decide when and what you are going to achieve, such as "I want to lose 2 percent of my body fat by August 1st."
- 2. Be realistic:* Make sure your goals are attainable. If you set your expectations too high, you will get frustrated and will be more likely to quit. Make sure, however, that your

goals are not too easy; they should be challenging. When you achieve a challenging goal, your pride and satisfaction will create more motivation.

3. Set short-term goals as stepping stones to your "ultimate" (long-term) goals: If your long-term goal is to bench press 200 pounds in one year, then set short-term weekly or monthly goals of the weight you will need to bench press to achieve your long term goal--develop a plan. It is a lot easier to accomplish a goal one day or week at a time, such as increasing 2.5 or 5 pounds a week, than it is to think that you need to increase your bench press by 50 pounds.

Make It Fun

Another way of assuring that you stay motivated is to make exercise fun. If you perceive your workout as a chore, you more than likely will not stick with it. Here are some techniques for making your workout something to look forward to.

1. Add Variety: If your weightlifting is getting tedious and boring, change one of these factors:

- Vary how often you do an exercise and the number of sets and reps you do.
- Find an alternate exercise; for example, if you always do the bench press using a barbell, try doing it with dumbbells or on a machine.
- Change the order of the exercises you do for each muscle group and the muscle groups themselves.

2. Include Friends and Family: Training with a workout partner not only makes your training session more fun, safe, and intense, but will also increase the likelihood of your showing up at the gym. Make sure you pick a partner whose goals and interests are similar to yours and who is willing to spot you correctly and motivate you to do your best.

3. Fight Discouragement: If once in a long while you blow off a workout because you choose to go out with friends, just accept and enjoy your choice--do not feel guilty. Otherwise, the sense of failure can make it harder to get yourself back on track. Focus on how much progress you have made so far, not on how far you have to go.

4. Expect and Prepare for Plateaus: If you feel you have reached a plateau and/or are bored, do not give up--this is a natural part of working out. Make sure to vary the exercises, sets, repetitions and order of your workout--continually search for new ways of making your routine fun and exciting.

5. *Schedule your Workout:* If you always exercise on the same days at the same time, your routine will become a fixture in your life, not a whim. Not going to the gym will feel unnatural. Including exercise into your busy schedule will be an adjustment, and staying motivated will be equally challenging. Change is difficult for many people. However, if you have the willingness to work through the initial emotional discomfort as you move step by step through a safe and effective program, you will find the confidence, commitment and determination that will ease the way.

When you begin achieving great results, the excitement and fun you experience will make the change well worth the effort. Action creates motivation! Good luck: we hope you enjoy all the wonderful benefits of a healthy, active lifestyle.

Please answer the following questions

1. How often do you exercise? _____ times a week

2. What type of regular physical exercise do you engage in?

3. What type of physical exercises have you engaged in during the last 5 years?

4. Have there been periods in your life when you exercised more often? If so, please describe

when:

5. Do you wish to exercise more than you do today? If yes, please describe why you do not

exercise more:

6. Taken all together, how happy would you say you are?

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Not at all						Very
happy						happy