



Now's the Time to *Start and Stick* with an Exercise Program

LINCOLN--Along with the winter winds and holiday feasts, comes the recurring, overwhelming feeling for most people to, "get off the couch and get fit." Despite the research that points us in this direction, why do so many people have trouble finding the motivation to start and stick with an exercise program?

"As physical therapists, we know the direct relation between exercise and health," says Renee Tewes, physical therapist and owner of Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center of Lincoln. "A big part of our job is to share the benefits of a healthy, active lifestyle. We find most people want to be active but cannot always translate that desire into action. It's our job to help each person decide what motivates them and help them begin a program safely."

It is common for people to start an exercise program but soon abandon it because they do not enjoy the type of exercise they have chosen.

"There are so many different ways to exercise and what works for one person may not work for another," says Tewes. "At our clinics, we evaluate each person's personality, whether they enjoy being with a group or whether they like to be more independent. We discuss the activities that they enjoy and exercise they have tried in the past. Before we discharge a patient we make sure they feel comfortable and enjoy the activity that works best."

"Today there are so many choices, including fitness clubs, yoga and Pilates classes (a form of strengthening concentrating on the abdominal and back "core" muscles), aquatic exercise not to mention video tapes and walking programs," Tewes says. Midwest Physical Therapy and Sports Center offers aquatic therapy and Pilates classes as well as standard equipment so patients can try a variety of exercise that will work for them in the long term.

Staying with a program can also be a challenge and finding someone to keep you accountable can help. The surge in personal trainers is evidence that many need a person to motivate them on an individual level.

"Not everyone is self-motivated and often having someone--a friend, a physical therapist or another fitness professional with whom to work closely with can result in more consistency. Regularity in exercise results in more improvements which is motivation in itself," says Tewes. "We often will set up a program for a patient and then ask them to call us a few weeks later to help them be accountable to someone while they are just starting."

Lastly, some people are hesitant to start or stick with a program because of injury. Pre-existing health concerns can deter one from starting an exercise program. In addition an increase in pain can put an end to a program.

Most programs recommend seeing a physician before starting a fitness program. One of the greatest benefits of working with a physical therapist is the expertise they bring in anatomy and physiology.

“Every person we see has at least one physical limitation or concern that must be kept in mind as they exercise. Physical therapists are experts in looking at the individual and designing a program that will meet the individual's needs without causing additional injury or pain.” According to Tewes, “If we replace one problem with another, we have failed the person. We set the patient up for success.”

With the variety of exercises available today, the number of health professionals and facilities available in Lincoln and the amount of research showing the benefits of exercise, motivation should be high.

“Making short term goals and taking baby steps will ensure success,” says Tewes. Change is hard but in 4 to 6 weeks the habit of exercise will be established and all the benefits of exercise will be start to become evident.”

If you would like to inquire if Physical Therapy can assist you in your exercise program, please contact Midwest Physical Therapy at either locations: 70th and A Street, 436-2535, or 40th and Pine Lake Road, 436-2986. Or check out their website at www.midwestphysicaltherapy.com.

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