

# Hear it from Dr Rod



## Making meaningful changes in fitness

By Raul J. Rodriguez MD, DABPN, ASAM, MRO

**M**aking a New Year's resolution is easy. Making it stick is hard. How can we make this January 1st our turning point for our health and fitness? The honest answer is that a meaningful change in fitness requires commitment, planning and effort.

So how important is health and fitness to you? Fitness needs to be important enough to you that you are willing to rearrange your busy schedule to make sure you can workout on a consistent basis. If you do not carve out time, the opportunity will never arise and fitness will continue to be something that other people achieve and enjoy. Once you have decided that fitness is important enough that you are willing to make it a real priority in your life, you must then make a plan!

Planning for your fitness begins with identifying potential pitfalls that will likely interfere with your workout schedule. Often the constraints will be available time and current level of physical conditioning. Be practical when planning your workouts around major life responsibilities. Make the most use of time that is the least affected by home and work. Once you have carved out this time for yourself, you can shift your focus to avoiding injury.

Avoiding injury is best achieved with a structured training program created by a Fitness Trainer. A qualified Trainer is able to assess your current fitness level and implement your goals into a structured plan. This helps you avoid injuries that result

from exercising too hard too soon. A Trainer helps set an appropriate pace to maintain a balance between the training loads placed on your body and physical recovery. The goal is a sustainable, focused effort over the course of time.

The final necessary element is your actual effort level in the gym. The first two variables here are frequency and consistency of effort. We do need to exercise often enough on a consistent basis for it to make a difference. We need to aim for four to five times a week regularly, at least. Next, is the duration of your effort. Both

Cardiovascular and resistance training should each be at least 30-45 minutes, depending on the intensity level. A Trainer will work you up to a higher intensity level when your body and mind are ready to manage it.

A crucial aspect to implementing meaningful change is to believe first that achieving a significantly higher level of fitness is possible. We must set ourselves up for success and then not be afraid to go for it. So much of fitness is a mental game. If we can get past the psychological part, the physical part is really not so hard. The single hardest part has always been just showing up.

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