



Habits: a core process of mind and body

by Scott R. Lebin

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It has been established that if you repeat a task for approximately 28 days, you will get to the point where you no longer think about what needs to be done; the task becomes a habit. Those who brush their teeth and floss regularly don't have to give it much thought. After breakfast and just before you go to bed might be the two times a day that you automatically take care of your teeth. You probably know that regular brushing and flossing have at least three major benefits: gum health, teeth health and heart health.

Recently, I had the good fortune to

hear Admiral William McRaven talk about Navy Seals training. He talked about the first lesson in Seal's training, which is to place the pillow exactly in the center head of the bed (the inspection involved using a tape measure to make sure it was in the center), fold the corners in a specific tight way and fix the top of the bed with not a wrinkle in it. If it wasn't exact, the bed was torn up and had to be made again. He discussed that it was a life lesson because the first thing in training he learned was to complete a detailed, exact task. He could begin his day knowing that he achieved the first

goal of the day. The point of this training is simple: if the recruiter can't make his bed and follow the little details, how can the Seals expect him to carry out more complex tasks? We begin to take pride in the little tasks we do well, and this accomplishment leads to other habits and new successes. The idea of developing a habit is also important when a person is developing exercise routines.

Physical activity is itself a part of a healthy lifestyle. However, the word exercise means that we will extend physical activity so that we can achieve high capacity actions that work to improve our whole cardio-vascular system. Thus breathing, muscle activity and brain function are all pushed to a high physical performance level. There are many ways to accomplish this kind of healthy exercise.

Games, to some degree, can be an enjoyable way of getting needed exercise. Tennis, hockey, basketball, volleyball and swimming are the kinds of activities people can enjoy. However, to be good in these activities participants often add weight lifting, running and other exercises to get the heart rate up and muscles conditioned so they can compete

at a more competitive level.

The problem with exercise is that it often is not enjoyable. It takes effort to physically push the body to a high-performance level. "I don't like to sweat," "I don't enjoy exercising" and "weight lifting is difficult" are all statements people make who avoid exercise. It separates them from those who do work out even though those who exercise still must put up with all the same negative aspects of conditioning.

The reason that those who develop the habit of regular exercise do it is that they like the results. So, if you want to live a healthy life, if you want to avoid illness, if you want to live longer and if you are results oriented, you will overcome the negatives and create a habit for yourself: the habit of a regular exercise program. The first step will be to start a program of regular exercise, and with persistence for at least 28 days you will be able to make your program a habit. Although the daily grind of exercise might require some fortitude, it eventually will become a habit; I am sure you will enjoy the results.



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