Get The Facts: New Year's Resolution

Myth:

To stick to my new year's resolution of going to the gym, I must start going as much as possible right away.

Fact:

New Year's resolutions are great. Everyone makes them in one form or another. Whether it be "I will lose 55 lbs this year!" in a formal grandiose statement or simply "I should cut back on caffeine this year" subtly to yourself. The majority of resolutions, however, are fitness related and unfortunately fail within the first few months.

When starting a fitness (or diet) program, many want to jump into what they think is their peak performance level. Some may predict correctly and can lift, run, or swim as much as they imagined they could, but, what many don't think about is the long term adherence to this program. For example: a competitive powerlifter who can lift 600 lbs would never plan on going to the gym 7 times more than normal and lift her/his maximum weight every day. This would be exhausting and dangerous and applies to anyone. I am sure you can run as fast as you say or lift as much as you claim but it is more about the mental aspect of adherence rather than the physical aspect of gymming.

What most trainers and fitness professionals recommend is before a goal like "55 lb weight loss" is set, create a workout schedule that you think is easily achievable (e.g. go to the gym for 20 min 2 times per week). As you become accustomed to the routine and it becomes habit, start adding in more days or time. The activities in the gym at this point are not as relevant, just get there consistently. Easier said than done I Know but here are a few tips that might help:

- Tell people who are close to you. Knowing that others are expecting you to do something and verbalizing your goals helps motivate you stick to what you said you'd do.
- Find a workout buddy. So many people set fitness goals as their resolutions, I'm sure you can find a friend, co-worker, or acquaintance who wants to achieve a similar goal. This helps keep you accountable and it's harder to flake on plans that you've made with someone else.
- Switch your routine up. I know we're all busy but most of us get into a routine. Try to make things interesting and change your whole routine and sneak the gym in there. If everything is switched up, going to the gym won't seem so foreign to your original routine.
- Get a personal trainer. I know most don't have too much extra cash to spare but even a few sessions to foster the habit and teach you some new exercises is beneficial. Plus, not only is there a sense of obligation because of a trainer waiting for you but also financial obligation "I spent all this money, I have to go."
- Sign up for a weekly fitness class whether it's yoga, lifting, zumba, bodypump, whatever… same concept as the personal trainer, being officially signed up and paid for raises the stakes to actually follow-through.

Once you are comfortable going to the gym at the frequency you want, the actual exercises can be altered however you want to fit your goals.

Another obstacle to working out is "I don't know what to do." This is a valid point, however, in the vast majority of gyms, each machine has a sign showing which muscle groups it works and how to use it. The employees at gyms are usually super eager to help, do not be afraid to ask. You pay for the membership so take advantage of the employees. Worst case scenario, just do the machines you know and end with some running (If you don't know how to run, I'm sure an employee can help with that too). YouTube is also a great resource for instructional exercise videos; you know you'll be playing on your phone mid-set anyway so you might as well put it to good use!

Conclusion:

Making resolutions are easy, sticking to them is not. Resolutions are a great way to forget about failures or mistakes in the past and move forward from this point on. Just be smart about it and make a good plan. Anything is better than nothing and even if you fall off the wagon, you can always start where you left off. Don't give up, remind yourself of your goals, and keep track of your progress. Happy New Year!

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