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Carol Juergensen Sheets

LIVE BETTER

Keep extra optimism in mind to be happy

Do you assess a situation and automatically find the good in it or do you protect yourself by looking at the negatives so it won't catch you off guard?

Although it is helpful not to be caught unaware of problems, the habit also attracts negative thoughts. People are much happier when they stay positive.

People take their mind for granted. They don't recognize it as a powerful resource to use when facing life adjustments. With practice, you can transform your feelings into powerful thoughts that will get you through any situation.

It takes conscious thought to move through the process of positive thought. It is not an easy method, but when done repeatedly it can occur unconsciously and become an automatic reaction.

You determine how you feel, what you think and consequently what you believe. You have the power to move your mind in any direction. The world is your canvas, and you get to decide the interpretation of your own painting.

It is common to think things through, but it is your choice whether you are kind and gentle about your life circumstance. Internal dialogue has a powerful impact on your mental health and your self-perception. Many people critique their life as being hard and unfair.

This type of negative self-talk can be a self-fulfilling prophecy because if you believe your life is hard, it will become self-defeating. You will project this energy, and life will be more difficult.

The exciting thing is that you have multiple opportunities to restructure how you think, which then affects how you view life.

If you tend to be negative, fear the worst or see things in a unconstructive light, you will have to retrain yourself to look at life differently. It requires diligence to create change, but it is a good way to create high self-esteem, healthier moods and a realistic perception of life's circumstance.

Here's an example of how it works:

It's autumn and all of the leaves have fallen. A couple spend six hours raking their large yard.

The wife says to her spouse, "We have really accomplished a lot today."

She focuses on the action.

The husband assesses that the yard will take at least another six hours of work, so he replies, "We haven't even made a dent in it yet."

The wife says, "Well, we filled up 30 bags, and I think that's great."

The husband says, "We have at least 30 more bags to go."

Who do you think is trying to enjoy the work? Who is appreciative of the experience of raking leaves?

If we could interview the wife and the husband, we might find that the wife appreciated the sunny, chilly day and the fitness involved in the rigorous work. She was able to see progress being made.

The husband on the other hand is on a mission to complete the task; therefore he is overwhelmed by the work, and all he can think about is the work left undone.

An age-old idiom comes into play in these situations: It's not the destination but the journey that matters.

Do you see yourself in the wife or in the husband?

Regardless of whom you connect to in this illustration, it is important to realize that you create your own journey.

You need to find the positives and repeat them silently to yourself. The next time you find yourself using negative self-talk, rethink your thoughts.

Then notice how many situations you have altered with optimistic thoughts in a given day so that you stay aware of your progress, which, of course, reinforces the positive.

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Joann Richardson stretches after biking five miles and walking two miles at the Franklin Cultural Arts and Recreation Center. But exercise doesn't have

to be completed in one long stretch, says dietitian Rachel Nix. Divide it into short stretches if necessary, Nix says.

Focused on fitness

Key ingredients lead to weight-loss success

By ANNETTE JONES
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The new year has come and gone, and for some people, so have their fitness resolutions.

Work or family responsibilities have a way of trumping diet and exercise goals for many people.

But others find a way to make a fitness plan stick.

The right mind-set and a support network are the keys to sticking with a diet and exercise plan, say health experts and successful dieters.

For Jennifer Skopecek, 25, the ability to lose weight was all in her head.

The former Johnson County resident, who now lives in Avon, said the dread of bariatric surgery drove her to a medically supervised, non-surgical weight-loss program through the St. Francis Medical and Surgical Weight Loss Center in Indianapolis.

"I tried so many diets — Jenny Craig, Atkins — but my weight kept getting worse, especially in college. Nothing worked," Skopecek said.

After her son was born, she ballooned to 300 pounds.

With the support of her doctor, she developed a plan that included diet and exercise. She lost 122 pounds in two years.

From working with a nutritionist she learned she didn't have to cut out any foods from her diet, but she had to break a lot of bad habits, like eating out several times a week. She also had to learn to cook with healthy ingredients and to know what combination of foods to eat so that she felt full.

Now she and her husband eat out only once a week. Their healthy habits led her husband to lose 30 pounds without trying.

Be realistic about changes to make them long term, said Rachel Nix, a

registered dietitian at St. Francis Weight Loss Center.

Avoid drastic methods, she said. They don't last.

Get children involved, too, she said. Have them help cook and prepare meals so they learn about healthy eating, too.

Adding activity to your plan is key, Nix said.

"We don't see any long-term success without activity," she said.

Exercise doesn't have to be during one long stretch each day, she said. Divide it up during the day or week into five- to 15-minute stretches.

Susan Bott, 33, of Whiteland lost 100 pounds in 20 months on a medically supervised, non-surgical weight-loss program.

A family history of diabetes led to a diet recommended by the American Diabetic Association. The plan lays out the number of serving of vegetables, bread and fruit to eat a day. Bott also does strength training twice a week.

She tried other diets and medication, but her weight continued to climb and her blood pressure went up as well until her current fitness plan.

She has maintained her weight for more than nine months.

Finding a program that's right for you is important, says Jordan Triest, senior program director at Baxter YMCA in Indianapolis.

Barb Jimison, 47, of the southside, has used two different methods toward her goal of dropping 28 pounds.

She lost almost 15 pounds participating in Dump Your Plump, a 10-week weight-loss program promoted by Partnership for a Healthier Johnson County.

Her success encouraged her to go on the Weight Watchers diet to achieve her final goal. So far she has lost 20 pounds.

Jimison's secret: "You have to want to lose (weight), and you have to have a support group."



STAFF PHOTOS BY JOSHUA MARSHALL

Ruth Wescott, left, and Hannelore Smith walk three miles a day five days a week at the Franklin Cultural Arts and Recreation Center. Including exercise in a weight-loss plan is key, says Rachel Nix, a registered dietitian at St. Francis Medical and Surgical Weight Loss Center. "We don't see any long-term success without activity," Nix says.

WEIGHT-LOSS HOW-TO

Tips for reaching health goals from Rachel Nix, a registered dietitian at St. Francis Medical and Surgical Weight Loss Center:

- Keep your focus on wellness and behavior: exercising, eating right and drinking water.

- Buy a step counter. If you are taking 300 steps a day, increase it by 100. Then keep adding steps until you reach 10,000 steps a day. Adding activity to your plan helps with weight loss and prevents muscle loss.

- Look at what you are eating and drinking. If you are drinking three cans of soda a day, switch to diet soda and drink more water.

- Make small healthy changes. Fill your refrigerator with fruits and vegetables, and eat them.

The more fruits and vegetables you eat, the less room you will have for fattening foods like cookies and chips.

- Keep track of how much weight you lose. You will be encouraged to continue.

TO YOUR HEALTH

Parent group supports others facing addiction

The Parent Support Network of Johnson County invites families to learn about addiction and how it affects each member of a family.

The event will take place from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Jan. 25 at Tara Treatment Center, 6231 S. U.S. 31, Franklin. Reservations are recommended. Information: 652-0372

Dump Your Plump program starting again in February

Partnership for a Healthier Johnson County will sponsor a new round of the countywide team wellness competition, Dump Your Plump, beginning Feb. 28.

Teams consisting of up to 10 people are challenged to set a weight-loss goal of up to 20 pounds and exercise at least

five days a week for 30 minutes a day. Contestants have a chance to win hundreds of dollars in prizes throughout the contest.

For a team packed, call 346-3768.

Web site can keep families updated about patients

St. Francis Hospital has partnered with an Internet service to provide free, personalized Web pages for patients to stay in touch with their families and friends during a hospital stay.

The service offers ways for patients and family members to:

- Update everyone at the same time without repeated phone calls or e-mails
- Post photographs, contact information and visiting hours.
- Create Web pages that they can easily update themselves
- Receive notes from friends and

family on a private message board.

This free service is available by visiting stfrancishospitals.org/carepages.com/stfrancishospitals.

Blood drives scheduled at Center Grove schools

Center Grove schools are participating in blood drives.

The Indiana Blood Center's bloodmobile will be conducting drives at the following times:

- 7 to 9 a.m. Friday, Center Grove Middle School North
 - 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Friday, Center Grove Elementary School
 - 7 to 9 a.m. Jan. 26, Maple Grove Elementary School
 - 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Jan. 26, Center Grove Middle School Central
- For appointments or information, call Jodi Behnke at 888-0185.

TIPS ON BUYING RUNNING SHOES

Have you hit the ground running to trim down after all those holiday treats? To get the support you need for a high-impact activity like jogging, invest in the right pair of running shoes. Here's how to find a shoe that fits:

- You should have about a half inch of space from your longest toe to the end of the shoe. This means you'll probably end up with shoes that are a bit larger than your regular size.

- Don't buy shoes that need to be broken in. They should be comfortable right away.

- Look for a sole that's split in two to provide a smoother transition from heel to toe.

- Shop at the end of the day when your feet are at their largest.

— Fine Living Network

