

## don't fall off THE FITNESS WAGON

You've made a new year's resolution to get healthy, eat properly and lose weight. You started the year strong, hitting the gym three times a week and diligently watching your diet, only to find your enthusiasm and motivation waning as the months go by.

Does this sound all too familiar?

Often times, as the New Year approaches, we see a spike in gym crowds in the first 3 months or so, comprising of many motivated individuals who zealously pick up weights and fill up the cardio classes with health and fitness-worthy goals in mind. But as time goes by, these same individuals start to lose their focus and slip back into their "comfort zones" of irregular exercise and eating badly, not realizing that their initial spark of enthusiasm can only be short-lived. Before they realize it, another year has gone by, and their resolutions have not come to fruition.

Here are some tips that you can practise consistently throughout the year and make a regular part of your life, so you never fall off your well-intentioned goals.

### MAKE YOUR TIME COUNT IN THE GYM

When you are not familiar with the equipment in a gym, you are bound to feel lost, with no clue as to where or how to begin. Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you can spare the resources, engage a personal trainer to familiarize you with the machines, plan your workouts and ensure that you are using the equipment safely and effectively. If you are familiar with the equipment, plan your own routine and get a workout buddy to spot you and push you along.

Change your routine once every two weeks; go a little further each time by pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. For example, if running on the treadmill for 30 minutes feels too easy for you, try doing intervals, e.g. run at the highest speed you can manage for 1 minute, recover during

the next minute, and repeat for 15 to 30 rounds or speed up the pace.

### INCREASE YOUR MUSCLE MASS

Incorporate resistance or muscle strength training into your routine and avoid doing just pure cardio. The more muscles you have in your body, the more calories you will burn. Optimal muscle growth, coupled with a proper diet, will facilitate fat burning.

Have you ever heard someone say they want to "look toned"? What gives you the "toned" look and "shape" is really your muscles. Too much body fat will hide the muscles. The fact of the matter is, as we age, we start losing muscle mass while gaining that extra 'cushion' (fats) even though our weight may remain the same. Lifting weights and resistance training is the only way to build muscles or maintain muscle mass.

### BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR CALORIE INTAKE

Cut back on your total daily calorie intake. For instance, if you are consuming 2,500 calories a day, cut down to 2,000 calories. This of course depends on your age, gender, lifestyle, occupation, etc., however, most of us do not work in jobs involving lots of energy expenditure and simply do not require that amount of calories.

If possible, stop consuming processed foods completely. I know it's tough because processed foods like instant noodles, canned goods or packaged foods that only require warming up, are rampant and convenient. As you are aware, in order to prolong the lifespan of these foods on the shelves, unhealthy preservatives are added. More often than not, these foods are also loaded with sugar, salt and flavor enhancers.

Cut back on or eliminate soda drinks, energy drinks and alcohol. Alcohol contains 7 calories per gram and is easy to

over-consume. Replace your soda drinks with plain water. If you don't like the taste of plain water, add some lemon or orange slices for a burst of flavor and even a little dose of vitamin C!

Increase your intake of fresh vegetables and fruits and use plain, unsalted nuts (in moderation) to replace your snacks. Have whole-grain items in moderation if you can't live without carbs.

### STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Last but not least, if your training is getting you nowhere, it's time to change things up, train harder and push yourself out of your comfort zone. Make sure you set goals and keep your focus on them.

It's never too late to start a healthy lifestyle.

### BY ELAINE GOH, PERSONAL TRAINER

Elaine has been with The Club for almost as long as she has been in the fitness industry. Certified through the Federation of International Sports, Aerobics and Fitness, her training techniques will help those who need assistance with weight loss or rehabilitation, especially due to injuries affecting the shoulders, knees and back. She is also a qualified Crossfit and Pilates trainer.