



Get off the couch - a negative look at inactivity

I don't mean to panic you but have you ever given any thought to the consequences of your inactions? Not the consequences of your actions, you probably think about those quite often, I'm talking about thinking about what happens when you do nothing about something.

Most people believe they should 'live in the now' and I don't argue with that but what I'm talking about here is putting a little thought into what happens if you don't take care of yourself. You may be good today, fine tomorrow, even okay an a year from now but have you ever thought about how you want to be in 10 years, 20 years or even 50 years? Your own body is the single most important asset you have. Without it you would not have all those other things you hold so dear, so isn't it time to do a little preventative maintenance?

The inactive lifestyles of North Americans today means most adults will not be around in 50 years. For the first time in history our children's life expectancy at birth will soon be less than our own generation. There's a simple reason for this: - inactivity. Too much time sitting in front of the TV or the computer and not enough time spent on physical activity.

So back to those consequences. I've spent a lot of time thinking about the future and a lot of time thinking how I want it NOT to turn out. Fear is a great motivator so I use it to my own advantage.

Here's a list of some of the things I do NOT want to be when I'm older; unable to walk up a flight of stairs (or the CN tower), too large to sit comfortably on an airplane (I plan to travel), housebound (did I mention I plan to travel?), unable to enjoy the great outdoors (or indoors), unable to chase my kids or even grandchildren (I like the sound of kids laughter), unable to run away from danger (or towards safety), weak or in constant pain (I plan to enjoy later life).

Now, if any of these situations describe you or someone you know, don't take it personally. Not everyone is to blame for his or her own inability to have a great quality of life in older age, but most are. I always believe you should do what you can with what you have and also if you don't use it, you'll lose it.

I hear many excuses for not exercising. The most common one is 'I don't have time'. Of course you don't have time, you have a shorter life expectancy than those who exercise regularly. We have months or even years more time to do things and more importantly our quality of life in those later years is so much better that we can continue to live productive active lives for much longer. The odds of heart disease, stroke, obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, and some cancers are all significantly reduced.

Another excuse I hear often is 'exercise hurts'. I don't know about you but I don't exercise to the point of pain. Whatever you choose to do, make sure you do it right.



Being active and healthy does not have to be painful. Any activity helps, even a light walk. Your body was designed to move so move it.

The third big excuse is 'it's boring'. Again, you are doing something wrong if you find it boring. Think of something you'd like to do and do it. It could be a walk in the park, cycling, rock climbing, playing a team sport, running a marathon, whatever, just do something. Once you know what you like to do, find some people to do it with. Increase your social circle with like-minded people. Before you know it you'll have new friends and a more active lifestyle, two things that will dramatically improve your quality of life. Everyone is different so find something that appeals to you.

One of the things on the list was to not be in pain. I run and I often have non-runners telling me how I am going to ruin my knees and won't be able to walk when I'm old. Actually, with a little care, I will have stronger legs and more mobility in later life, especially if I keep up my active lifestyle, than those who are inactive. The 'little care' I'm talking about is making sure small injuries do not become chronic and doing a little preventative maintenance like stretching and improving my range of motion or maybe even getting the occasional massage. Even making sure my running mechanics are correct can help. The point is here to not just blindly work out until you injure yourself, get some professional help and advice and you'll be able to enjoy the activity for years to come.

One thing that even most active people neglect is their flexibility. Being flexible and having good range of motion is also very important. Whenever I see someone straining to get up out of a chair or hunched over and shuffling along the street I think about the fact I need to spend some more time on my flexibility. The inability to move your body freely will severely hinder the quality of life as you get older, so spend some time to stretch. While you're at it clear your mind and relax. Not only will you help your body but also reduce your stress levels and help your mind.

Being active does not have to be an obsession but it does deserve some thought. Think about the benefits of doing it and the consequences of not and then make a conscious decision. Write down some of those reasons and keep it somewhere. If you find yourself falling off the fitness bandwagon, read your list to remind yourself why you started in the first place.

Someone once said 'Live forever or die trying'. I like that mantra. I'm hoping you'll be around in 50 years to see this guy in his mid-eighties chasing a bunch of grandkids around in some far away exotic place. If you do, ask him if his name is Tony.

About The Author

Tony Denford is a personal trainer and owner of Hit the Road. He has been training primarily runners since 2002 and has worked with beginners all the way to Boston Qualifier Marathon runners.

Tony emphasizes balance and variety in his training methods and always tries to make sure his client's fitness routines are fun as well as beneficial.

Visit www.hittheroadrunning.com for more details on Hit The Road's programs and services.

