

Starting with a Single Step

By Dan McPherson

Everybody loves a good montage. So rewarding, so fast, so inspiring, so effortless to watch. Or in the words of the parodic song "Montage":

Show a lot of things happening at once,
Remind everyone of what's going on (what's going on)
And with every shot, show a little improvement
To show it all would take to long
That's called a montage

I would dare go so far as to say that we have all, at some point or another in our lives, dreamed of our own montages, with our crescendo theme song of choice, cutting from shot to shot as we run faster, jump higher, lift more and ultimately, raise our arms in triumph.

The problem, of course, is that when it actually comes to walking the walk, few of us make it past those first scenes in which we are slow, weak and out of shape. Too often do we start with the mindset that it is all or nothing, Reebok Crossfit-commercial toned or bust. Or worse yet, we talk ourselves out of taking the first step because we are daunted by all of the steps to follow.

Enter Dr. Matthew Spencer of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary with this golden nugget of advice: start small. This was one of the many helpful tips conveyed to participants at Assist's inaugural wellness retreat in Banff on a crisp weekend last November. Changing your routine and forming new habits can prove to be onerous. In order to benefit from physical activity, however, you do not have to be an Olympian. Improving fitness, even marginally, will make activities of daily living easier to perform, and will help to prolong independent living. According to Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, in order to achieve health benefits, adults aged 18-64 years should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.

Not surprisingly, more physical activity provides greater health benefits, including reducing the likelihood of depression, anxiety, stress and poor psychological well-being, as well as improving immune function, and cognitive function.

So what's the trick to taking that first step? There is none. You just take it. But Dr. Spencer does offer some advice to help you take the others:

1. Begin by forming small goals that are easy to achieve.

2. Identify activities that you enjoy.
3. Bolster motivation by finding an exercise buddy with similar goals to keep you accountable.
4. Diarize a specific time for physical activity. The earlier in the day you exercise, the less time you have to procrastinate about it.

Now, block some time off in your calendar, pick that theme song, and take that first step. Every montage needs an opening shot. 🎬



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