

Use 'em or lose 'em

Exercise those muscles for renewed vitality

By Myrna Partrich
special writer

JUDY LOCKWOOD is turning 35 years old this week and is wondering what is happening to her life.

These years were supposed to be her most productive, the time when she was supposed to feel vibrant, alive and ready to tackle the world.

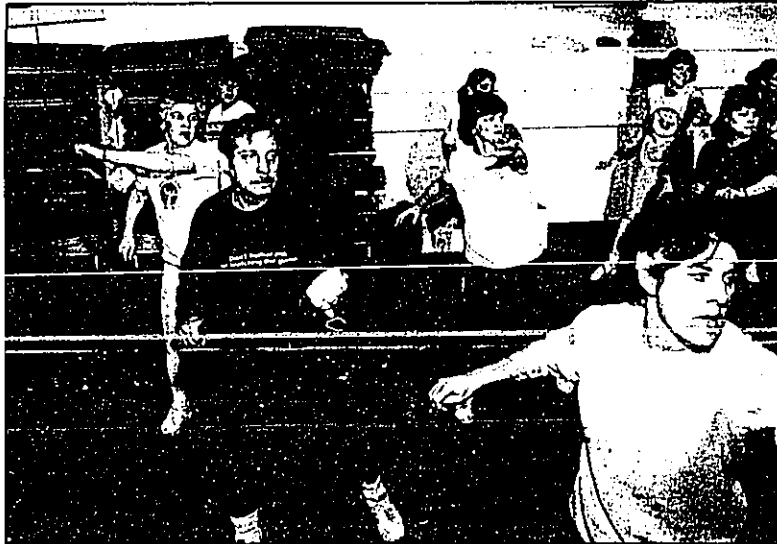
What happened, she wonders? At 35, Judy has a husband, two children, a dog, a full-time job and no time to take care of herself. She is 15 pounds overweight, tired all the time, experiencing shortness of breath, has upper back problems from stress and periodic headaches. Not only that, but her hair needs to be colored and her nails need a manicure and she can't find the time to go to the beauty shop.

I'M HERE TO HELP Judy Lockwood and maybe you too.

How important is your health? How about feeling healthy also? Your mental attitude toward your body will determine how you actually feel. Think of it this way: "I can be a new healthy me with energy and vitality and able to do all the things I need to do." The answer to your problems is in one simple word — exercise.

Let's begin with motivation. I'll let you in on a little secret. Self-motivating skills are not inherited — they are learned. It appears that for some people, regular exercise routines are as natural as breathing. They were all beginners at one time, just like you. They came up with an many excuses as you have not to exercise. But the bottom line, or the reality of it all, is that if you don't use your muscles, you will lose your muscles.

THERE IS ALSO A psychological benefit from regular exercise. When your body is working out, your mind will experience euphoric activity and the stress that causes upper and low-



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er back pains, headaches and overall tiredness is released. You actually have more energy after you work out.

Now we are ready to pick an exercise program that will work for you. Pick an activity without lots of struggle. It should be something you enjoy and something that won't overwhelm you.

I usually recommend walking at first because it is something everyone can do and needs no special instruction or coordination. I see it as a non-antagonistic exercise — and what better time to begin walking than in the spring. There is so much beauty to see.

Now you're ready for a little organized activity. You are feeling good and want to feel better. A friend invites you to a beginner low-impact exercise class. You might feel:

- awkward
- uncoordinated
- unable to maintain the pace
- unattractive in a leotard
- embarrassed
- have no rhythm
- why, I can't even dance

But you go anyway. The studio seems like a friendly place. Everyone is there for the same purpose so there is a natural camaraderie. There are men and women there of all sizes, shapes and ages, dressed in everything from unmatched sweatshirts to shorts, leotards and tights. Anything goes.

"ARE WE HAVING FUN yet?" shouts the instructor. Being new, you

can stand at the back of the room until you feel comfortable. You don't have to follow all the steps or moves. Your heart and fat cells won't know the difference — just march in place for a while. If you feel tired, slow down, take a walk to the water machine, take a short drink and walk back to your place. Remember to wear clothes you feel comfortable in. Exercise classes are not fashion shows — I promise.

You have not reached a dangerous stage in exercising. You are feeling good about yourself, you have been walking and going to class regularly and now you are tempted to stop. Why not? You're so busy, and you're feeling great.

The key to success with exercise is commitment. The benefit of this commitment is the results. The value that you receive from exercise is expressed in a healthy you everyday. This only come from being good to yourself by taking care of yourself through exercise. You can make a commitment to be good to yourself and be able to handle all the things in your life better too.

To maintain a healthy body, you need to exercise at least three times a week for minimum of 30 minutes. But if you can only exercise twice a week — do that — It's better than not exercising at all. For the best over-all body conditioning, you should exercise more frequently — five or six times a week. A good instructor will develop a program that

will work just for you.

The program will include strengthening both cardio and various muscle groups within the body and flexibility and stretching exercises. By the way, flexibility is one of the major keys of retarding age.

THE BENEFITS OF exercise are overwhelming. Don't worry about getting old — stay young with exercise. Much of what we call aging is not caused by the wear of activity but by lack of use. You are also worried about those extra pounds you've been carrying around. Let us not forget our society's fixation with weight control. Fat people are discriminated against more than any other group of people.

When you exercise, your body will automatically crave a healthier diet. Your body likes being fit. Exercise changes the way your body burns calories. Add exercise to your proper eating habits and you will lose more body fat.

By strengthening your muscles, your metabolism burns many more calories all the time — even while you rest. How about your beauty sleep? You will rest sounder if your body has had an activity. Goodness knows we need our rest.

Myrna Partrich is an exercise columnist whose column appears every Thursday in the Observer & Eccentric sports section. She is also the co-owner of the Workout Co. at Maple and Telegraph roads.

Credits

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