

Change your Thoughts, Change Your Body

How to let go of limiting beliefs and make fitness a part of your lifestyle forever

If you had trouble sticking with an exercise regime in the past, the reasons may be worth exploring. Many times, events that occurred in our past affect the beliefs we have about health, diet and fitness. For example, do you avoid physical activity because of a childhood incident, such as?

- Being teased during gym class
- Being told to, “quit playing and get to work”
- Poor performance in standardized testing in gym class
- Embarrassment at being uncoordinated compared to other kids
- Belief that you weren’t good enough to participate in group activities/sports

As a result, you may have made decisions as an adult, such as:

- I’m not good at sports, therefore I won’t participate
- I’m not coordinated, so I won’t bother trying new activities
- Exercise is play and I should be working
- I should focus on my strengths, rather than work on my weaknesses

3 SIMPLE STEPS TO A NEW YOU

Step 1 – Go Back in Time

Try to remember incidences in the past that may have lead to your current beliefs/habits related to physical activity. Write them down in a notebook and take some time to reflect upon the validity of these statements. This exercise in “relating past experiences to current habits/beliefs” will help shed light on why you may have trouble sticking with a consistent program, or even getting started with one in the first place.

Step 2 – Question the Truth

Question your current belief system to see if what you believe holds true and whether your beliefs are serving your best interests.

Here is an example:

“I was teased in the 3rd grade for being a slow runner. As a result, I was always chosen last for team sports/games. As an adult, I avoid group fitness classes or trying anything new. I would like to run in a 5k, but I’m afraid I’ll come in last.”

There is no question that fear can keep anyone from pursuing a goal, however it is important to understand why you are afraid. Begin by questioning the emotion at hand (fear or anxiety, for example).

If you came in last place, why would that be hard for you? What would that mean? Is it true? Would it be worse to try the race and come in last place, or to never try at all?

Rather than focusing on the outcome, focus on why you want to run the race. This will take the emphasis off of your “performance” and allow you to enjoy the experience itself. Then, dare to dream: What if you came in first place? Do you believe this is possible? Why or why not? Is that belief true?

The purpose of this exercise is to break down some of your current beliefs. The immediate result will be some confusion, because without our belief system (which gives us some sense of bearing and structure), at first we feel lost and without boundaries. This is completely normal. Once you become comfortable questioning your beliefs, you’ll develop a new set of beliefs

Step 3 - Change Your Beliefs

Take one or two examples from the previous exercise and ask yourself the following questions for each:

- Why do I believe that?
- Is it true?
- What if I didn’t believe that – what would it mean for me?
- Would that be okay?
- How would changing my belief enhance my life today?

Try this exercise for any other limiting beliefs that pop up from time to time. Sometimes limiting beliefs exit your mind immediately, never to return. Sometimes they come back, but with less effect. Continue to question their validity. While progress may be slow here, it will be worth the time and effort to discover that your beliefs about physical activity may be keeping you from achieving your healthiest body.

About the Author:

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