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FITNESS HANDOUT

BY KATE LARSEN

Cold-Weather Exercising

When the weather turns cold or snowy, do you feel like abandoning your exercise program? While motivating yourself can be more challenging, it's well worth your time and effort! How can you stay focused on your workouts during cold-weather months? Examine your motivation for exercising, explore new exercise options and make sure you dress appropriately if you exercise outdoors.

Realize that even if, despite your best intentions, you don't exercise as much as you did before the cold set in, that's okay. The goal is just to do as much activity as you can to maintain your physical, mental and emotional fitness.

Staying Motivated

When it's time to choose between keeping your exercise date or breaking it, think of these reasons to keep the date:

Exercise Is Good for Your Health. Exercise is important for disease prevention, everyday function, stress reduction, weight management and much more. For the sake of your continued health, it's important not to stop exercising just because it's cold outside.

Exercise Is Good for Your Mood. Continuing to exercise when it's cold will give your self-esteem a boost. You will be proud you are adhering to a health-promoting activity.

Exercise can also help provide you with the extra energy you need to maintain your sanity during cold-weather months. The endorphin highs you get from exercising can hold you over until the weather warms up. Plus, your increased energy level will help you make healthier lifestyle choices. (Notice how you eat a healthier diet when you work out regularly?)

If You Exercise, You Serve as a Good Role Model. Staying committed to exercise, despite the challenges, makes an important statement to your family and friends.

Different Exercise Choices

When the weather is cold, you might not be able to perform your usual activities. Take this as an invitation to experiment with different exercise forms. Alternating new activities with old favorites can keep your enthusiasm high. This cross training can also help you avoid getting injured from repeatedly doing the same activity. Here are some more suggestions for the cold-weather months:

Outdoor Activities. In many places winter months offer the opportunity to try exhilarating, high-energy activities, like cross-



country or downhill skiing, skating, sledding or brisk walking. (Make sure you walk in snow, not on ice.) Being outdoors on crisp, cool, blue-sky days can be spiritually uplifting.

Indoor/Facility Activities. If you usually exercise outside, try indoor activities at a fitness facility. Sample some workouts you have been curious about—maybe group cycling classes, yoga, martial arts classes, indoor swimming or boxaerobics.

At-Home Activities. Inclement weather may require you to work out at home, so be ready for this. For most types of equipment you see at health clubs there are similar models designed for home use. Try stationary bikes, treadmills, rowing machines, weight machines, free weights, jump ropes or rubber resistive equipment, such as Dyna-Bands or tubing. Exercise videos, music tapes and CDs can also keep you motivated.

Cold-Weather Dressing

When exercising outside, you want to make sure you avoid hypothermia and frostbite. Also, cold exposure, while not usually life threatening, can certainly ruin your outdoor exercise activities. Here are some tips from the American College of Sports Medicine:

Layer Clothes. The clothes next to your skin should wick away moisture and protect you from winds. Try fabrics such as polypropylene, Dryline and wool to wick away moisture, and Gore-Tex® and Activent® outerwear for wind protection.

Cover Your Head. Hats are important to prevent warmth from "pouring" out from your head. Heat loss from the head and neck may account for as much as 50 percent of your total heat loss when you're outside.

Protect Your Hands. Mittens provide more warmth than gloves. ■

An IDEA three-star presenter, Kate Larsen helps clients simplify their lives and take charge of their health through her company, Winning Lifestyles Inc. Living in Minnesota, Larsen understands the importance of exercising in less than ideal weather. She encourages her students to LifeWalk™ year-round.



This handout is a service of IDEA, the international association of fitness professionals, serving personal trainers, exercise instructors and business operators.