

HEALTH MATTERS

Presented by Pure Fit Club

A Multi-disciplinary Collaborative Newsletter of Wellness Information

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Spring Into Sports

By Dr. Rick Weinstein MD, MBA

Director of Orthopedic Surgery Westchester Health Associates

As the frozen tundra finally has subsided from freezing us into extinction, we can now start doing non-winter activities outside. My runners, who are some of my most driven athletes go crazy when they are not able to run. The weather is the external threat to running, but it is critical that runners make sure their bodies are ready to get back outside.

When you are a teenager or younger, stretching is not as important as when you are older. With age, muscles and tendons get stiffer and tighter and are more prone to sprains, strains and tears.

The key to stretching is first warming up the muscles. This means a light jog or jumping on an exercise bike for a few minutes first and then stretching. Do NOT stretch cold! The stretches that are key for runners are the quadriceps, hamstrings and Achilles (gastroc-soleus).

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The quads are best stretched by lying faced down and bringing your foot to your butt. The hamstrings are stretched by sitting in a V and reaching for your toes. Achilles is stretched planting your foot flat, keeping your knee straight and reaching forward. These stretches should be done for 20-30 seconds three times in a row alternating right and left legs.

Other stretches that my spring athletes need are sport dependent. Tennis players and golfers need to stretch out their shoulders and arms as well as their backs. Soccer players should also stretch out hips and groin muscles.

Probably the most important thing to do when getting back into sports for the spring is to start slow. Build up the amount of time and intensity slowly. Continue to push yourself and do more, but allow your body the time to adjust to beginning activities again. Enjoy the better weather and prevent injuries.



Is It Really Sciatica?

By Dr. Robert Inesta DC L.Ac CCSP

Westchester Sports & Wellness

All too often, we think of pain in the buttocks and thighs simply as sciatic pain. However, this may not always be accurate. True sciatic pain is pain caused by some type of insult to the sciatic nerve, or the nerve roots that give rise to the sciatic nerve. This can be due to herniated disc, stenosis, impingement by the piriformis or other external hip rotator muscles.

An irritation to a small nerve called the posterior femoral cutaneous nerve (PFC) is something that can easily be overlooked or mistaken for something else. This nerve supplies the skin on the back of the thigh, from the lower buttock to the knee, with sensation. If the pain is only in the back of the thigh and does not travel below the knee, there is a good chance this is the main nerve structure involved, and not the sciatic nerve. There should also be no evidence of neurological signs, such as muscle weakness and reflex changes, upon physical examination if the PFC nerve is the main culprit. This nerve does not have a motor, or muscle component, and therefore this function should be intact. True sciatic nerve pain will often present down the lateral side of the thigh and below the knee and can consist of sensory changes, such as pain/tingling, and/or motor, or muscle weakness. Of course, there are always exceptions, but this is the classic pattern. There are also other causes of thigh pain that can be purely muscular or fascial, such as a hamstring or glute injury, and their trigger point referral patterns.



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Insult to the posterior femoral cutaneous nerve can be due to compression injury, impingement due to adhesions, and/or connective tissue and muscle tension that restricts sliding of the nerve and causes stretch irritation. Direct trauma, or falling on the buttocks, repetitive cycling, and injections have been known causative factors. It is often successfully treatable with conservative care and responds very well to acupuncture needling, aggressive, manual soft tissue work, such as Active Release Techniques, and Fascial Manipulation and active rehabilitation. This can also be a very stubborn area, so it is important to address it as soon as possible. Usually, the more chronic the condition becomes, the longer it can take to correct. A thorough exam is essential, not only to rule out other causes of nerve irritation, but to also determine any mechanical imbalances, repetitive strain, and joint dysfunction that may be underlying contributors. As with all treatments, it is important not only to address and relieve symptoms, but to correct causes and restore/establish a healthy balance so that the body can function optimally.



REMINDER!!!!!!

Westchester Sports & Wellness has moved locations.

Our new address is:

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How To Have a “Beginner’s Mind” For Your Health Goals

By Kim Gold, MS

Co-creator of Mindful Life Weight Loss Program

“In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s there are few”
— Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind: Informal Talks on Zen Meditation and Practice*

You started the new year off with good intentions to improve your health and fitness. Then there was snow, and more snow, and still more snow dampening the fiery resolve of January. The good news is that spring is here, and with spring comes the potent energy of **new beginnings**.

New beginnings are not just seasonal. In Zen Buddhist tradition there is a concept known as “beginner’s mind.” Beginner’s mind is *a state of being that involves possibility and openness to experience*. It is not being ruled by the past, bogged down with “shoulds,” and discouraged by past failures. It is a sense of ever-present newness and energy.

Here are three ways that the potent energy of “beginner’s mind” can help revitalize your fitness and weight loss goals this spring.

1. **Beginner’s mind sees every moment as a fresh moment.** If you haven’t worked out since before the first frost, it can be difficult to generate the motivation to begin again. The past can have a powerful momentum that carries over into the present. But there is no reason why it needs to be this way. The past is gone. The present moment is all we have. The present moment does not care if you worked out yesterday or last year, or if you have been eating comfort food all winter. Take a few deep breaths, and remind yourself of this truth, and then get started. Think of the above quote---*beginnings contain possibility*. Possibility is exciting. Consider your re-entry into fitness and health as containing the seeds of possibility, rather than burdened by the past.



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- 2. Beginner's mind tries new things.** This spring, take the opportunity to try a new class or workout. Step outside of your comfort zone. Don't be afraid to fail, look clumsy, or be the slowest person in the class. Even if it turns out that you don't like your new adventure, you will at least have had a new experience. You may also discover a totally new hobby or sport that you never could have imagined. With diet, this is a good time to break out of an unhealthy eating rut. Cold weather, indoor time, and too much tv can result in a poor diet. Take this opportunity to break that pattern and try a lighter, healthier fare. Think unprocessed, single-ingredient foods (nothing from a box or package with long lists of ingredients). Try some of those interesting-looking vegetables (Swiss chard? Bok choy?) that may not be a part of your normal diet. Swap out an unhealthy snack with something fresh and natural that is not a habitual food.

- 3. Beginner's mind lets go of "should" and "can't."** Beginner's mind does not say "I'm too old to do this" or "I can't try rock climbing (or boxing, or yoga, or strength training...)" or "I can't cook." Beginner's mind does not care if you have gained 20 pounds this winter. *Beginner's mind sees possibility.* This mindset can inject optimism into your life, as well as fun and spontaneity. If you have been relying on take-out food, or processed food, because you think you "can't cook," this might be a good time to adopt a beginner's mind and give cooking a try. Don't be afraid to fail, and don't aim for perfection (forget about Top Chef standards). *Cooking more foods at home is one of the most important things you can do for health,* yet many people are intimidated by cooking. Adopt a playful attitude, let go of expectations, and see what happens.

One of the best ways to cultivate beginner's mind is to adopt a regular meditation practice. This does not require a big investment of time. Once you learn the basics, just a few minutes a day can have a powerful impact on your life. You will practice being in the here and now, and connecting with a sense of newness and possibility in every moment.

Happy Spring!

About the author: Kim Gold is the co-creator of the Mindful Life Weight Loss Program weightlosswestchesterny.com. She has an M.S. in Marriage and Family Therapy and has studied meditative disciplines for 25 years. Kim teaches classes and leads groups to help people lose weight through behavior change.



Beware Of Stress Fractures This Spring

By Dr. Ryan Minara DPM

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As winter slowly releases us from its clutches, our desire to be more active rises with the temperature. Training begins in earnest for many sports, and people (especially runners), start the transition from indoor activities to outdoor ones. As our activity level increases in terms of both time and intensity, and our training surfaces change, many people find themselves suffering from overuse injuries. This time of year, I often see one particular type of complaint: stress fractures. Stress fractures are injuries in athletes of all age groups and competitive levels. They are often frustrating injuries that leave people sidelined for various lengths of time.

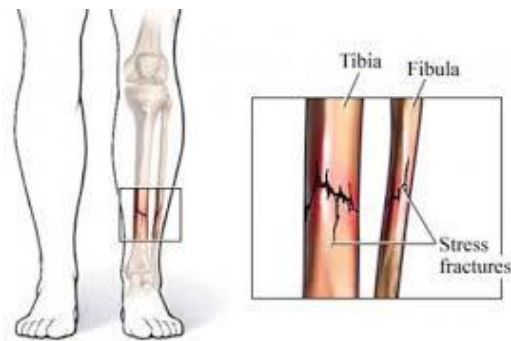


What is a stress fracture? A stress fracture is a weakening and eventual disruption of a bone caused by a build-up of repetitive but small forces (stresses). Early on, it typically starts as swelling of the softer inside part of the bone (the medullary or cancellous bone), and it can eventually disrupt the harder shell of the bone (known as the cortex). I often try to explain it to my patients by having them imagine an old, dry tree branch, or a young sapling. If you apply a sudden extreme force to the dry branch, it often cracks and splinters. This is akin to a fracture caused by trauma. Now imagine the fresh tree branch. If you gradually bent the branch back and forth, it will not break, but rather weaken at the point in which the force is applied. This is more like a stress fracture. However, if the stress fracture is left untreated, it could result in cortical disruption and sometimes even bony displacement.

Stress fractures most commonly occur in the weight bearing bones of the lower extremities, with the metatarsals being most affected. However, I have seen stress fractures in all foot bones and of the lower leg bones as well. Signs and symptoms include pain, swelling, and occasional bruising with symptoms increasing during weight-bearing activity. These fractures often occur most commonly during periods of rapidly increased activity, changes in surfaces (treadmill to asphalt, grass to turf, etc). However, they can even occur from one long day of wearing ill supporting shoes and showing the in-laws around town. Increased risk factors include osteoporosis and vitamin D deficiency (which many people have after a brutal winter).

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If you suspect, you have a stress fracture, your doctor will perform a clinical exam and take x-rays. Unfortunately, stress fractures rarely show up in early stages on x-ray. You may need to undergo an MRI or other imaging study such as a bone scan, to detect the stress fracture. The most important treatment is rest. However, some people may need to have protected weight bearing in a surgical shoe or fracture (CAM) boot. Rarely, surgical intervention is necessary. Many times, you can continue to train with non weight bearing modalities such as biking, or deep water running. There are also special treadmills that work to offload your body weight while still allowing you to run (i.e. Alter G treadmill).

So, as you increase your activity this spring, do so gradually. If you are switching running/training surfaces, also slowly work in the new surface. Make sure your shoes are supportive, and replace them if you have too much mileage on them. If you suspect of stress fracture of the lower extremity, make sure you see a foot and ankle specialist right away. They can start you on a treatment program tailored to you and your athletic needs, and help protect you from more serious injury.



In Shape For Summer

By Denise Groothuis RD CPT

Registered Dietitian, Certified Personal Trainer

Spring is here! And while it might not feel like it at the moment, we will soon put away our jackets and shed all of our layers for clothing that shows off our figures. Now is the perfect time to start thinking about your diet and exercise program and to get back into shape for the beach!

To get in shape, you need to eat right AND exercise. One will not do the trick without the other. Rather than obsess about crazy workouts or counting calories, the most important change you can make to promote weight loss is to alter your environment and your habits in order to make healthy living second nature. According to noted physician Dr. Mark Hyman, “the key to changing habits is to understand how change really occurs. And for the most part, it occurs by design, not by accident or wishful thinking. It occurs by transforming the unconscious choices we make every day, shifting them so that the automatic, easy, default choices become healthy choices, not deadly ones.”



The old adage, “you are what you eat,” hits the bull’s eye when discussing diet. While the amount of food is important, the types of foods we eat are just as important. Sugar is toxic, and it is very important to limit foods with extra sugar in order to promote weight change. Many people have food cravings and find change to be extremely difficult. As stated above, in order to change your eating habits, you must change your environment. Do not keep candy, chips, and sugary items in your house. Place fruits, vegetables and nuts within easy reach. Make produce more accessible by cutting it up and displaying it. Do not go to the sections of the grocery store where you may be tempted to buy unhealthy items, and avoid restaurants or shops where you have a weakness for unhealthy choices. Serve meals in measured portions and put leftovers away. Use smaller plates to eat less. Find new recipes online and keep condiments handy to add flavor to food. Plan your food and snacks in advance so you never have to “cheat” and you are never left hungry with the urge to grab something unhealthy. Change is possible if you have a plan!

You also need to have a plan for exercise. Make sure to set aside time to go to the gym and work out. Make it a priority and schedule it into your calendar. If you find you are not exercising as much as you would like, figure out what your obstacles to working out are and create solutions for them! Exercise should be enjoyable, so find something you like to do – there are so many options. Also remember that cardio is not enough to change your body; resistance training is necessary to boost your metabolism, increase muscle mass, and burn fat. Work with a personal trainer to learn how to safely exercise and ask the trainer to make you a plan to follow.

Change your current habits and start your routine to see results! It is all about having the motivation, ability and a trigger to change. We live in a mostly unhealthy world, so we need to create our own healthy environment and design it to make it easy to do the right thing. That is how we create health, and it is the key to success in weight loss and transformation of mind and body.

Are You Mentally Ready To Compete?

By Alex Diaz, PhD

Sports Psychology Consultant, Certified Performing Edge Coaching Professional

At last, the long winter is now behind us. After a long wait for warmer days, it is time now to get ready to rumble. The nicer days are upon us and that means the welcoming to the practice of outdoor sports. Regardless of your chosen sport, there are many factors that contribute to the participation of your game; maybe it is just the enjoyment of the company of whom we choose to play with while, for others, it is the wanting to excel and to improve from last year's performance that will push them to get even better.

If we did not keep up with our exercise routines during the winter season, now it is the time to get back to the gym and to get our muscles in athletic shape and ready to perform. Maybe during our long break, our skills became a bit rusty and they may need the assistance of a coach. Likewise, if we did not practice the mental side of sports, it is now the time we put some effort into getting ready before the game starts. Hence, there are three areas that need to be addressed in order to be completely ready to enjoy our game: physical, skills, and mental. The successful coach Joe Patterno once said, "Everybody has the will to win; not everybody has the will to prepare."

First and foremost, we need to set goals, and I mean meaningful goals that address the physical, skills, and mental areas. Goals set without commitment are wasted opportunities; goals are there to only serve you; expectations are there to serve others.

There are three conditions required to set meaningful goals:



1- Be specific: write down the exact goal to be accomplished; make sure you separate short from long term goals.

2- Set a time frame: set a due date that is within a reasonable timeframe for each goal and commit to it.

3 - Reward accomplishment: make sure you take time to celebrate what you did.

To get in mental preparation shape, we need to set aside daily minutes to consistently practice what we want to achieve. I wish we could very easily accomplish what we desire, but it will most likely happen when we dedicate time and effort for the intended results.

So, here are a few rules to get us in a better mental preparation shape:

1- Practice breathing relaxation: Count to 4 when you inhale, then to 7 as you pause and to 8 when you exhale. Repeat this exercise eight times and it will help you to relax.

2 - Practice affirmations and positive self-talk: Focus on the positive not the negative, the present not the past, the process not the result, the target not an image of the self. Use short words that contain positive connotation, such as: "let's go, now, this time."

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3 - Use a pre-shot routine: stick with the basic fundamental to achieve good results. Practice a routine that feels natural for you and use the same pre-shot routine to help you focus on task. Remember, the routine is to help you remain focused on task, not just for the sake of doing it.



4- Build self-confidence: the best time to build confidence is with positive results. However, the best time to learn is when we look at all the positives even when we do not meet our expectations. Use these opportunities to learn how to improve rather than to get upset with yourself. By taking a positive approach for each of your performances, it will help you to continue improving.

Enjoy your summer and every opportunity to get to play your favorite sport!

For more information, please visit my website: www.sportsmentaledge.com



What's Your Score?

By Charles DeFrancesco CPT/Michael Gay CPT

Pure Fit Club/ Fit and Functional

The Athletic Standard Index measures and ranks an athlete's overall athleticism. Athletes complete a short series of tests and measurements, which provide coaches and recruiters with a clear picture of their potential to not only perform, but also to improve. The initial test is not sport-specific; it is a tool used to measure general athletic ability. While the test is not meant to assess movement patterns, it can be broken down to identify some movement deficits or strengths. We suggest doing a separate movement screening and using the data from that to identify deficits that may be affecting the athlete's performance.

Many college athletic programs, including Yale, Nebraska, Florida State, Michigan, Texas A&M and Ohio State are now mandating the ASI for their athletes. Within the next 5-10 years, this is expected to become the standard metric for all college recruiting.

ASI is a great way to compare athletic performance data amongst athletes and their peers on a national level. The data can be used to track improvement both in the gym and on the field, and is also a way to measure an athlete's performance level when returning from injury.



Pure Fit Club employs the only approved testing proctors in Westchester County. In order to maintain consistent test scoring and data collection, ASI testing can only be administered in an approved testing facility. Each month, Pure offers free ASI testing at the Carver Center in Port Chester, NY. Registration is available online at www.purefitclub.com.

So what's a good Athletic Standard Index Score? This really depends on the sport you're interested in playing and the caliber of the athletes participating in that sport. So a better question is, "What is a good ASI score for an athlete like me?" While scores will vary by sport, the following baseline has been provided for general consideration. Professional athletes attain ASI scores in excess of 1400, and super stars achieve scores exceeding 2000. For a high school athlete, the target score is 1000 (males) and 900 (females). Again, these numbers are targets, so athletes should strive to exceed these benchmarks where possible, and seek the help of fitness professionals to improve upon them for the future.

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This is where Pure Fit Club and its personnel have excelled among their peers. Pure Fit Club will interpret the scores for each athlete and help them to understand how they should be training in order to increase their score. Our team of Certified Expert Trainers offers group training clinics to enhance an athlete's overall fitness level. However, to reach peak performance, we offer individual training, inclusive of customized training programs for each athlete's specific needs to assure they attain their maximum level of athletic ability. Pure Fit Club wants to help you or your young athlete to stand out amongst their peers by out-hustling, out-playing, and out-performing their competition.



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