

GOOD BUSINESS

YMCA wants your New Year's resolution to succeed

About that New Year's resolution. You know the one: You're going to join a gym and get fit!

The YMCA of Southern Arizona is with you on that, but our experience shows that even the best intentions on New Year's Eve can be distant memories by St. Patrick's Day. We typically get three times as many new member sign ups in January as we may get in any other entire quarter; and those are followed by a much greater than average drop out rate.

Watching this phenomenon year after year, we've learned a few things that we hope might help you stick to your 2009 resolution to pursue a healthier lifestyle. These tips are not only based on our own experience, but also supported by academic research.

☐ *Be sure you're ready to make a commitment.*



Dane Woll

Your life is going to change if you are to make time for the gym or other fitness activity. Are you ready to exchange an hour of TV, extra time with your family or another hour at work to make that happen?

☐ *Commit for the right reasons.* Vanity can be a powerful motivator in the short run. But if you pursue a fitness regimen only to take off a few pounds from the holidays, you'll miss an opportunity to improve your health in the long run—a step that could reduce your health care costs and lead to a longer, happier life.

☐ *Exercise will only take you so far.* Every extra step you take to be more active will help you along to a healthier lifestyle. In most cases,

though, you'll need to change what you eat, too. You may not need to go on a diet; you probably can get healthier eating about same number of calories if more of them come from fruit, vegetables, fish, nuts and whole grains, and fewer come from processed foods, starchy snacks, fat and sweets.

☐ *Community keeps you motivated.* People are most successful at lifestyle changes when their immediate community supports a healthier lifestyle. Reach out to those around you who live the way you'd like to live—those who eat well, stay active and keep their stress levels down. Why not recruit your family into your plan to eat better and get more exercise, too? Their company can make it more fun, and that will help keep you on track.

☐ *Make it easy on yourself.* How convenient is the location you're considering for your workout? The closer it is to your home or workplace, the likelier you are to keep a consistent schedule. And about that schedule: Is equipment available, and are the classes scheduled, at times that work for you?

☐ *Think outside the gym.* You need more consistent exercise than what you can get on the golf course on Saturday. What more can you do to increase your activity, whether you join a gym or not? Think creatively! Park

farther away from work and shopping. Take up vegetable gardening. Walk the dog more often, and invite friends and family to join in. Make it a club with a regular schedule, or join an existing walking club.

☐ *Think about the investment, especially in these times.* Consider whether the facility you're considering has activities for the whole family. Remember, community keeps you motivated. But more than that, the whole family's health will benefit from getting more active. Your well-being is tied to theirs, in spirit, mind and body. There's no better investment than your family's health and well-being.

The YMCA is in the business of building strong kids, strong families and strong communities. We really want you to succeed with your healthy lifestyle changes, but those changes must be sustainable. That matters a lot more than a New Year's Resolution. We sincerely wish you a Y Healthy 2009.

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