

Creating a Recipe for Wellness-Stopping the Cycle of Bad Health Habits

By Lisa Schilling RN

Today it seems that more and more people are falling into a negative spiral of personal habits. The recipe starts out by adding increased stress and responsibilities. Then you add a reduction of personal time, mixed with fatigue and lack of quality sleep. Combine with convenience food, comfort eating, and continue until you are fully unmotivated and discouraged.

Does this sound familiar? Often, this becomes a recipe for disaster. Much like a snowball rolling down a hill, one poor behavior combines with another to increase the speed of the results. You will find that stopping this cycle is just plain difficult.

Because one behavior leads so easily to the next, it is like trying to stop a chain reaction of falling dominos. The more stressed you are, the more you crave non-nutritious foods. The more short on time, the more convenience items you eat and there's no time for the gym. The more weight you put on, the less energy you have and the more difficult it becomes to move around.

Can you see how easily this situation can get out of hand? Often people wake up one day, take a look in the mirror, and say to themselves, "How did I get this way!" Well it did not happen overnight. It happened while you were focusing on OTHER things. Sometimes these are basic survival needs, but often they are simply poor choices.

Just as Maslow spoke of a Hierarchy of Needs, we see that people must meet basic needs before seeking more advanced ones. Without adequate food, shelter, clothing or safety, the state of your health and fitness seems less important. However, in America the issue has less to do with lack of basic needs, and more to do with a distortion of the "want-need" belief.

Today people are cultured to expect to have television, cell phones, computers, designer clothes, new cars and the list goes on and on. These are not needs. They are wants. Somewhere along the way, people have been conditioned to think that without these kinds of items they cannot live a fulfilled life.

What does that have to do with health and fitness? More than you realize. In order to have

all of these items, people put an enormous amount of pressure and stress into their lives. To have, use and maintain these items, people work more and also lead a more sedentary life.

Those two things, increased work load (often unfulfilling work), and an otherwise sedentary lifestyle, lead to being chronically overweight. Being stressed and unfulfilled, leads directly to poor eating habits and a lack of productive exercise. After working all day, being stressed at an unfulfilling job, the last thing most people feel like doing is getting some exercise.

It has to do with a time principle. When at work, your time is not your own. When given the chance to be on your own time, many who find themselves overwhelmed and exhausted, will choose to simply wind down or complete the few tasks they still have on their list.

We all have peak energy times. This means you need to plan ahead to achieve your best results. Morning people have an advantage. If you can consistently exercise in the mornings and start your day off right, you have a greater chance of creating a lifelong habit.

However if you are like me, and experience a three-hour brain delay from the time you open your eyes, you may have to be more creative. There are always ways to achieve your goal, if you are willing to learn more about what drives you and what stops you in your tracks.

You can use this information to craft a wellness plan that will be adaptable to your needs. For good health and weight loss you **MUST** stop the snowball and change the recipe. This will require you to make some manageable changes and consistently stick with them.

First establish **WHAT** you hope to accomplish, then begin to highlight **WHY** it is important for you to accomplish it. This will be your motivator and it is required to keep you focused on what really matters.

Evaluate what is holding you back: unfulfilling job, no free time, poor planning, too much stress, or just a lack of direction and make the needed changes. It is time to shift your focus to what really matters and create a recipe for wellness. Your recipe is created from each choice you make, and the results are measured by your health as well as how you look and feel each day. Choose wisely!