

Exercise for Life **Whatever Happened to Recess?**

By Lisa Schilling

Do you remember having recess as a child? It gave you something to look forward to. It gave your mind a break and allowed you to let loose some energy. You didn't think of it as *having* to "get some exercise". It was just fun! You played and drank in those feel good brain chemicals – chemicals released during physical activity and from taking in fresh air and sunshine. **It is time to reclaim "recess"** in your current REAL life. Don't laugh! This is not about the playground, but it is about reclaiming some personal time.

Most people were active as kids, because activity was part of daily life. As adults life is much more sedentary and laden with multiple responsibilities. You now have to schedule exercise like an appointment, or you tend to *skip* it. It is easy to allow the stressors of life to overwhelm your childhood spirit. People have forgotten how to have active-fun and how to just "play". The responsibilities of life start to squeeze that out of people as they age. But playing does not have to stop at a certain age. It may be reinventing things you loved at other times in your life. How does someone get back to that idea of activity being a natural part of the day, not a tacked-on task? You must make time for it. A wise man once said, "A man makes time for what a man wants to make time for" and he was right!

Don't get stuck in the ruts of life. Often people fall into bad habits as a result of lack of planning or due to uncontrollable circumstances that put them into a "survival" mode. During this time you are not going to be receptive to new ideas or changes. You are simply struggling to keep your head above water. However, the problem comes when the situation improves, but you *still* continue in a "survival/just exist" mentality. You live like you did when barely making it. Even though you could do more or better, the old habits have

become so comfortable, you can't seem to break out of what has become familiar and routine. **It is time to bust out of it!** You must constantly *reassess* your situation and "change" to flow with it.

Lasting change usually begins with a sharp break in your normal routine. You must create this change. It is time to bust out of your old ruts by finding ways to comfortably alter your daily routine. Things like inserting a fitness class, personal trainer visit, weight loss group/challenge or even just a date with a friend to exercise, can jump start your efforts and provide a new healthy template. Planning to just *add* some resistance training to your *normal* routine or to just *eat better*, is usually very difficult to maintain for any length of time. Often it takes stepping out of the box to create a **new normal**. Having planned exercise time takes pressure off of you while you are trying to "relax" at home. Who has not sat on the couch thinking to themselves, "Boy, I really *should* be getting up and exercising a little"?

When you make a set-aside time for activity and stick to it, you will no longer feel pressure or guilt when you are at home because you will have completed the "obligation" to your commitment. As a result, your time at home is more peaceful and you can "rest, relax and restore" without that nagging voice reminding you of what you *should* be doing. Consider it a *gift* to yourself. This can reduce stress, increase relaxation and promote mental wellbeing all in one simple effort. So create a **break-out plan**, stick to it and be accountable to it. Even if it is a very small gesture, it will be more than you were doing before. As always, start slow and gradually build up to you goal by using the 10% rule (gradually increasing your efforts by only 10% at a time, versus large jumps that cannot be supported). By gradually adding exercise into your routine, you *allow* it to become a regular behavior; a new and welcomed habit.