



Vitality = Exercise

by | Matthew McNutt

Seven minutes a day of motionless exercise guaranteed to give you a new body in just two weeks!

That's quite a promise. But the before-and-after photos are extremely compelling! With electrodes doing all the work on your muscles, exercise doesn't get much easier. And to tell you the truth, seven minutes a day is reasonable—I could fit that in during an *American Idol* commercial break. Rock on, Chris Sligh! We salute you.

Personally, though, what really keeps my lazy bod awake at night is watching whatever it was they rigged to Jason Scott Lee in *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*. You know...the electrodes and whatnot that zap him over and over resulting in the equivalent of about a billion pushups? Meanwhile, he just sits at his typewriter, tapping away.

Awesome. Seriously cool. That definitely appeals to my computer-geek personality.

Active vs. Non-active

I believe there are two types of youth workers out there:

1) The athletic-active-sporty types. They start local FCA groups, coach high school teams, organize basketball tournaments, and know obscure trivia about famous athletes. Honestly, even if they don't have regular exercise programs, this column isn't really for them—they get the exercise they need every day in the parking lot, gym, pool, whatever. It bugs the tar out of me, but I'm the other type of youth worker. You know...

2) The movie-watching, iPod-listening, computer-geek and theater-geek type. Do you want a line on *Star Trek* trivia? I'm your man. The closest thing I have to regular sports activity is my Nintendo Wii. If there's a way to play sports sitting down, I'll invent it—which is why "electrode exercise" appealed so much to me.



Matthew McNutt is the youth pastor at Boothbay Baptist Church in Boothbay, Maine. As a contestant on *The Biggest Loser* in 2006, he hopes to set a healthy spiritual and physical example for other youth workers who are, in turn, setting examples for the young people in their care. You can get in touch with Matthew at www.tjosm.com.

More Important than Ever

As our technology progresses and we become less physically active, getting necessary exercise becomes an even more critical issue. Hardly a day goes by without hearing about or reading about the necessity of more physical activity.

The world in which God originally placed human beings required a high level of physical activity just to survive. There was hardly a moment of downtime: Work, travel, play—all of these were physically demanding activities. Frankly, that's the best thing for our bodies, as they function at their peak when physically fit.

As we tend to our bodies as "temples of the Holy Spirit," the issue is not pursuing a certain body weight; it's about pursuing the health that God created us to enjoy and desires us to benefit from. And while transforming my temple, one of the biggest eye openers came from the level of exercise I began and continue to maintain—and its benefits I experienced almost immediately.

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The Results

As we incorporate regular exercise into our lives, several things begin to happen. Besides lowering blood pressure and the risks of heart attack, diabetes, and stroke, recent studies cited in *Newsweek* show that exercise improves moods, lowers

stress, improves sleep, increases energy, raises self-esteem, and increases brain power by triggering new nerve growth.

My dangerously high blood pressure was in a normal range after only *one week* of intense exercise—and I still weighed around 350 pounds at the time! In addition, after only eight weeks and a loss of 80 pounds (leaving me still close to 300 pounds), I was able to stop using the "snoring machine" and mask I'd depended on at night for my sleep apnea.

The doctors were shocked—they assumed I'd have to lose at least 150 pounds before my sleep apnea proved manageable. But in spite of my size, I'd reached a point of physical fitness that actually gave me greater strength and endurance in all areas of my health.

A friend of mine who suffers from asthma—who's as thin as they come—told me he's noticed the same thing. As long as he maintains a schedule of swimming several hours a week, he keeps his asthma at bay; it's only when he leaves out the exercise that the asthma attacks resume.

What's the Point?

When it comes to health and vitality, body weight isn't necessarily the determining factor. Of course pounds carry a ton of impact (pun intended), and too many of them will place a strain the heart and the rest of the body. But regardless of our size, when we take part in four to six hours of hard physical activity every week, we can begin experiencing right away the physical health and vitality God designed us to have.

We should still strive to lose weight if we need to, but know that you don't have to wait several months or longer for the pounds to come off before feeling better and getting healthy inside. The impact of intense exercise is almost *immediate* if you keep it up.

For more on my workout routines and specific exercise advice and ideas, visit The Journal blog at www.tjosm.com.