

GETTING In SHAPE

And Staying That Way!

by Suzanne Rich, Lady of America

For many Americans, the search for a healthier lifestyle ends before it ever begins. Each day, thousands of us wake up truly believing that this will be the day that we change our lives for the better - the day that we embrace regular exercise and a good diet as the means to a healthier future. While our hearts are in the right place, all too often we aim our sights too high, and in our enthusiasm we set unattainable goals, and set ourselves up for failure in the process. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, more than half of those who begin exercising drop their program within three to six months. The truth is, in order to establish and maintain a successful fitness and diet regimen, each one of us must create realistic goals, along with daily routines and a workout strategy that conforms to the unique aspects of our lives.

Imagine a busy mom with three young children, a challenging career, and countless community obligations deciding that a ninety-minute workout, three times each week, is the right fitness path for her. Or, imagine that same mom deciding to revolutionize her diet, pursue fitness classes and in-home workouts all at the same time. While it sounds unreasonable, the fact is that many of us set goals that do not correspond with the demands of our families and careers. The result is that instead of losing weight and gaining muscle, we gain excuses not to exercise, and lose the enthusiasm that brought us to exercise in the first place.

To get your health and fitness program in shape and on track, a few simple rules can make all the difference:

- **Find the time (even if it's just a few minutes):** When it comes to sticking to an exercise plan, conti-



nunity is more important than duration. If you cannot make it to the gym, find ways to fit in 10 minutes of activity a few times that day. Take a short, brisk walk around the block at lunch. Climb a few flights of stairs between meetings. Park farthest away from your destination and walk.

- **Begin at your own pace:** When starting an exercise program, there is a good pace for everyone, whether you are in shape or not. Some may need to start slow. Starting with just a few minutes a day and increasing as you go is better than no exercise at all.

- **Go with what works for you:** Many people say they don't like to

work out, but with all of the classes, cardiovascular equipment, variety of weights and machines now available, there is bound to be something for everyone. Make a point to try at least one new form of exercise or class a week until you find one that sticks.

- **Get familiar with the equipment:** Using a personal trainer is a great way to make sure you are exercising the right way. If affordability is an issue, choose a gym that provides circuit training or free instruction on their equipment. Many gyms provide these hands-on services at no extra cost to their members.

- **Get involved with your workout:** Taking group exercise classes at the gym is a great way to stay motivated about your program. You'll have a scheduled time each week, and an instructor who will keep the energy level high. Also try using the "buddy system -" if you sync up your exercise regime with a friend you can push each other along.

- **Find the right environment:** If you are self-conscious about your fitness level, look for a gym that caters to your specific needs. Finding the right environment to pursue your exercise program is key.

No matter what your fitness level or long-term goals may be, it is vital to keep your daily routine in line with your lifestyle. In the end, that is the best way to stay motivated, which will ultimately keep you in the fitness game for life.

About The AUTHOR



Suzanne Rich is a certified personal trainer, group fitness instructor and the owner of Lady of America Fitness in Edison, New Jersey. Prior to opening her gym, she was a regional manager with several national big-box retailers, an experience that she draws from when helping Lady of America members design work out regimes that balance with the demands of work and family.

Lady of America Fitness Centers provide a complete workout experience to help their members achieve their fitness goals. The women-focused centers offer a unique Zumba course and strength and toning equipment designed specifically for women. The full-service clubs also feature Pilates, Yoga and aerobics classes alongside amenities such as childcare, sauna and massage. For more information, please call (732) 494-335, or visit www.ladyofamerica.com.