

# staying power

SEEING FITNESS AS A PROCESS HELPS MAKE A HABIT  
OUT OF EXERCISE. ○ BY GARY HEAVIN

The apostle Paul wrote about the difficulty of *doing the things we know we need to do*, rather than *doing those things that we don't want to do*. The habit of exercise can be one of those things.

## What We Need to Do

We know that exercising regularly is something we need to do. The benefits of 30 minutes three times a week at Curves, and walking or playing hard on most days, are indisputable. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* recently reported the results of a study by University of Pittsburgh researchers, who analyzed a woman's health risks for coronary disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and death. They concluded that the risks for these conditions among overweight women may have been previously underestimated. If that isn't enough to get and keep you moving, I don't know what is.

## Process vs. Journey

But how do we acquire the habit of exercise and stick to it? The answer is in our understanding of "process." Fitness is a process, not a journey. Journeys have destinations and end points. If we measure our progress by end points, we tend to either stop at points of progress or become frustrated by lack of progress. Processes, on the other hand, are never finished. They are what we do and who we are. If you're someone who works out, you work out. When you miss a week or a summer, it's not failure; you simply start to work out again.

## The Progress Is in the Process

Are you winding down from a busy summer during which you may not have been exercising regularly? Rather than feel frus-

trated, simply begin the process again. Understand that you have no choice about exercising. It's not a decision that must be made again. You know that you can squeeze 30 minutes three times a week into your schedule. You know that once you get on the circuit, it's time for yourself. You enjoy the music and companionship. Your clothes fit better. In fact, your whole life fits better.

Schedule your week with your workouts and other physical activities planned in advance. Meet your friends at the gym. Talk with your Curves trainer about accountability. She will gladly stay in contact with you and keep you focused. Get weighed and measured monthly, and discuss your progress with your trainer. Just remember, the progress is in the process.



## A Habit Is Born

Habits take about 30 days to form. The first month at Curves may involve scheduling conflicts and guilt, as you take time for yourself. You may not have the energy to work out, but you know that it's the only way to get the energy. The learning curve on the circuit takes effort, and sweating might be a new experience. But

as you move into weeks four and five, you'll find yourself driving to the gym on schedule without guilt or dread. It becomes easy to work out, difficult to miss. Your burden becomes your blessing. That's the magic of process. You're someone who works out. ●

**GARY HEAVIN** holds a bachelor of science degree in health and nutritional counseling and is the author of numerous books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *Curves*. He has been counseling exercise and weight management for more than 30 years.

ROB BUCK

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