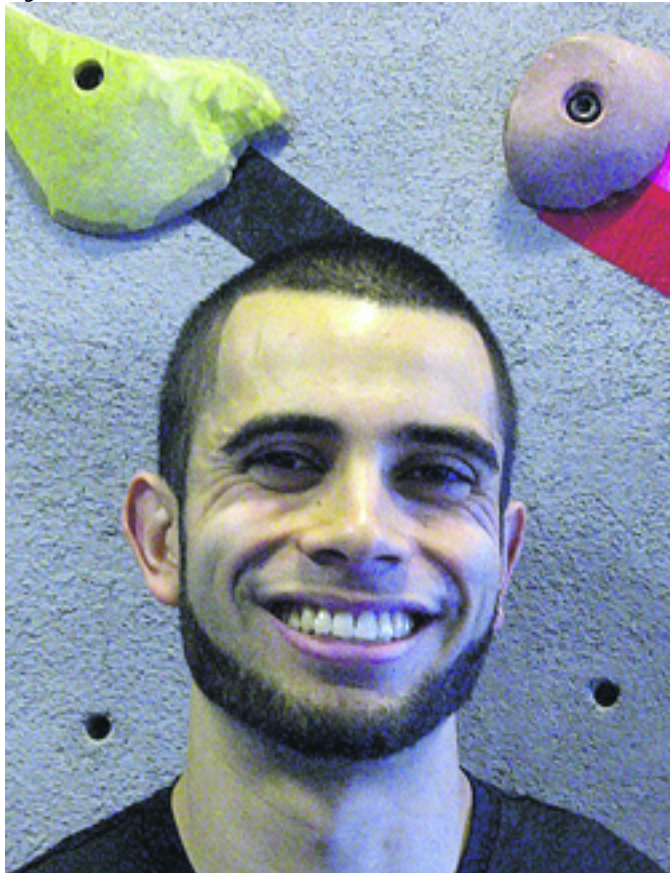


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## Take the Body You Have; Make it the Body You Want

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"New Year's resolution time, I want to fit into those old jeans!" "Boy, the holidays really did a number on me; I've got to get in the gym!" "Man it would be great to just drop these ten pounds and tighten up." "I really just want to look and feel better." Particularly around this time of year, sentiments such as these are all too common. Whether the goal is five pounds or 50, getting stronger, slimming down, achieving better health, or most commonly some combination, we all love the idea of working out and getting results. And why not? The idea of transforming our bodies is very exciting and can be highly motivating. There's no question that most of us have the desire to change for the better; that desire is a great start, and it's critical for success. Unfortunately, the more critical part, namely the tools and knowledge of how to make those changes, is something that most of us simply lack.

How many of us have (or know someone who has) ambitiously joined a gym or started a new fitness program and been unsure of what to do, or even why we're doing what we're doing? We often wander into the gym, spend some time on the treadmill or exercise bike, maybe use a few weight machines, and call it a day; ultimately we exercise inefficiently or even counter-productively. We don't really know how to work out and consequently, we have no idea what kind of results to expect. This sort of aimless, unguided exercising almost invariably leads to frustration and loss of motivation, and causes us to believe that changing our bodies is simply too hard, that the time we spend isn't good enough and we're just not in complete control of our results. In reality however, all we're missing is the understanding of what to do, and why to do it.

Perhaps the simplest, most fundamental (yet often overlooked) principle of fitness is the importance of elevating the heart rate. Getting our heart rate up is the single most important part for an effective workout. It's critical for better cardiovascular health and burning calories, and plays a vital role in other workout principles, such as the necessity of both weights and cardio training. Similarly, it can be used to improve our fitness throughout our daily lives, particularly for those of us whose jobs involve minimal movement.

Parking farther from the office and walking, skipping the elevator for the stairs, always taking phone calls standing up, getting out of the chair every hour for a brisk two-minute walk are all practical, effective habits to implement during the work day that really add up. Not only do these help us burn extra calories, they increase our metabolism and keep muscles and joints from stiffening up. Ultimately, small changes like these go a long way in improving our health habits and better preparing us for our workouts.

We all want to look better, feel fitter and be healthier; it's natural and for most of us, it's downright necessary. The body we want is waiting for us; how long will we wait before making it a reality?

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