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Read more on page 7



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- From the President's Desk
- GDL Enforcement Key to Teen Driver Safety, NJSACOP Joins With Teen Coalition to Educate Members
- Grant Writing Secrets to Success

Small Changes, Big Results

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There are countless changes that you can employ to improve your fitness lifestyle. Although they have the best intentions, many people are often unsuccessful in their attempts for two reasons: One is trying to make major changes; another is trying to make too many changes.

Dr. James Hill, the Director of the center for Human Nutrition at the University of Colorado Denver, is an advocate of what's known as the "small-changes approach." He and his colleagues have calculated that 90% of the population gets a surplus of up to 50 calories per day which, of course, results in an increase in weight. Because of the metabolic costs that are associated with storing energy (fat), 50 calories result from an excess of about 100 calories. Stated differently, reducing either caloric intake or caloric output by about 100 calories each day is enough to prevent an increase in weight in 9 out of 10 individuals.

Dr. Brian Wansink, the Director of the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab, has a similar perspective. In his book *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think*, he recommends that you limit yourself initially to three small, easy, doable changes that you can make without much sacrifice. Once these three changes become "mindless," you can add more.

The effectiveness of a small-changes approach has been demonstrated in a number of studies and is endorsed by many organizations. This includes the American Dietetics Association, the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society.

The fact of the matter is that making small changes to your fitness lifestyle increases the likelihood that those changes will become habits.

And that's what you need to do: Get to the point where change becomes a habit.

The small-changes approach can be implemented in a variety of ways. Take losing weight, for example. If statistics are correct, being overweight affects roughly 200 million people in this country alone and several billion people worldwide.

In order to lose weight, your caloric intake must be less than your caloric output. The best way to accomplish this is to eat less and exercise more. But that's easier said than done, right? Well, let's see how a small-changes approach can be used to achieve a favorable outcome.

With eating, one small change that you can make to your fitness lifestyle is to eat or drink a little less each day. Most people consume far too much sugar. The average non-diet soda—aka "liquid sugar" - has about 100 calories per eight ounces. If you drink eight less ounces of non-diet soda every day for a year, you'll get 36,000 less calories which is about 10.43 pounds.

With exercising, one small change that you can make to your fitness lifestyle is to walk a little more each day. Taking 2,000 steps with a 32-inch stride is the equivalent of about one mile. Walk this distance in 20 minutes—a pace of three miles per hour—at a bodyweight of 190 pounds and you'll use nearly 5 calories per minute or a total of about 100 calories. If you do that every day for a year, you'll use 36,500 more calories which, again, is about 10.43 pounds.

These two changes are small, easy and doable. This might not seem like much but it will add up over time; Enacting both of these small

changes on a daily basis—drink eight less ounces of non-diet soda and walk one more mile in 20 more minutes—and over the course of a year, it amounts to 73,000 calories which is almost 21 pounds. How does that sound?

Note: A pedometer is a device that counts the number of steps that you take. Most sporting goods stores sell pedometers that are relatively inexpensive yet reasonably accurate for counting steps.

Remember, there are virtually an unlimited number of small changes that you can make. With a caloric intake, you could drink low-fat milk instead of whole milk or eat half of a cookie instead of an entire one; with caloric output, you could take the stairs instead of the elevator/escalator or park farther away from where you're going instead of closer.

Any changes that either reduce caloric intake by about 100 calories per day or increase caloric output by about 100 calories per day can be effective. The idea is to make a few changes at a time that are small, easy and doable.

By making small changes to your fitness lifestyle, you can obtain big results.

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