

9 Thoughts on Fitness

1. I typically train 5-6 days a week. Through all my years of working out in everything from martial arts to aerobics to triathlon, 95% of my days have started with a little voice in my head that says, "no way are you working out today!"

2. I've learned that except for the 5% of mornings when I roll out of the sack specifically to work out, to utterly disregard the little voice, for at least an hour.

3. After 40, the whole game changes. Flexibility, injury recovery, motivation, results; all seem to take a bigger hit each year. It becomes more difficult and yet more important than ever, to keep at it consistently. If you jump off the fitness cart for a few months or even weeks, as I have, you'll get back to your previous fitness level about 1000 times slower than when you were 30.

4. The good news about aging is you get a clear idea of how old people, who can't move, become old people who can't move. That fearful realization can be a terrific motivator.

5. I became a father on the day before my 43rd birthday. My daughter was in a jogging stroller two weeks after birth. She and I (and the jogger) have participated in about 25 events. When she could run, she started running the last 100, 200 and 400 yards of races. We never had a specific discussion about running, it was just something I did and because she didn't get a vote, so did she. 4 1/2 years and a couple thousand miles later, I recently opened my eyes in the morning to find her standing patiently beside the bed, wearing only a visor (because I do), a pair of gym shoes and a smile. "Daddy, can we go running?" I felt like hell, but was ready to go in under 10 seconds. I showed her what to wear, gave her a requested water bottle and around the block we went. A half-mile. She ran the whole way and the next day was the proud owner of everything in her size that Niketown sells. Running is now our weekend morning routine. It's taught me that parents don't have to preach, they just have to do.

6. After trying everything from acupuncture to hypnosis, it was running that got me off cigarettes. I went running five miles a day, 40 straight days, in the Rocky Mountains above Banff, Alberta. I quickly discovered that I was too tired after the run to flick my Bic and even if I could light up, I didn't want to undo all that daily effort, with a cigarette, especially when I knew what awaited my lungs the next day. Within a week I was feeling better and within a couple of months, non-smoking was my habit.

7. Another fitness mantra for me: **take the long view**. I believe, the minute you put away thoughts of instant fitness and its elusive twin, instant weight loss, you're well on your way to achieving both for life. The snake oil salesmen who hawk weight loss pills and belts that jiggle fat away, rob us, not only of our money, but of the journey.

If you take the long view--that fitness is something you will do several times a week, for the rest of your life, you'll find contentment in taking small steps. After all, you have plenty of time to reach your goals now. Climbing everest is simply a lot of small steps taken with consistency. The beauty is: you don't remember the time it took to get to the summit. Instead, you're filled with the satisfaction and personal strength instilled by each of your small steps.

8. Another mantra: **I've never felt worse after a workout, than before it.** Don't think--just start. Return to thinking, when the brain finally figures out you're enjoying this.

9. In case you find any of this sanctimonious, it might help to know that my recent calculations indicate that I consume three times the annual national average of beer.

