

Do you have a challenge with unhealthy exercise? Answer these questions...

1. Do you exercise seven days a week?
2. Do you feel guilty if you miss a day?
3. Do you exercise even when you are ill?
4. Do you exercise even if you have an exercise related injury?
5. Do you ever deny to others how much you actually exercise?
6. Are you embarrassed about your weight?
7. Do you exercise in order to get rid of excess calories?
8. Do you constantly think about eating, weight and body size?
9. Do you become anxious prior to eating?
10. Do you feel guilty after eating?
11. Are you preoccupied with feeling fat?

If your answer is 'yes' to a majority of these questions, consider accessing some of the available resources.



What did TJ mean?

Give about two hours every day to exercise, for health must not be sacrificed to learning. A strong body makes the mind strong.

W. Jefferson

In TJ's day, daily living included exercise such as walking to class and working in a garden as well as participation in sports and fitness. Two hours of exercise was a daily accumulation of movement as opposed to a single workout.

Resources

ON-GROUNDS SUPPORT:

- Ainsworth Clinic - Individual and Group Therapy
434.924.0645 • www.virginia.edu/~psych/ainsworth
- Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) - Individual and Group Therapy
434.924.5556 • www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/caps
- Intramural-Recreational Sports - Health & Fitness
www.virginia.edu/ims/fitness
- UVA Cares - Resources for the mind/body/spirit
indorgs.virginia.edu/uvacares

WEB SITES OFFERING SUPPORT:

www.nationaleatingdisorders.org
www.something-fishy.org
www.anred.com



UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA INTRAMURAL-RECREATIONAL SPORTS
434.924.3791 • www.virginia.edu/ims • fitness@virginia.edu

when good habits turn bad:

Balanced Exercise



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Concerned? So are we!

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

According to the Surgeon General, accumulating 30 or more minutes of daily activity, such as walking to class, on most days of the week will yield many benefits of regular, consistent exercise, including better overall health, increased energy and decreased stress levels. However, too much exercise can be dangerous leading to irritability, stress fractures, joint & ligament injuries, bone loss, irregular menstruation in women as well as poor physical and mental performance.

When exactly does a healthy habit become too much of a good thing? While unique to each individual, the benefits of exercise generally depend on how you balance three factors:

- Frequency: how many days per week you exercise
- Intensity: how hard your heart is working during exercise
- Duration: how long you spend exercising during each session

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that adults exercise 20-60 minutes, 3-5 times each week to maintain and/or improve fitness levels. Doubling your workout duration or frequency does not necessarily double the benefits of your routine, and may have emotional and physical consequences. Determining the line between just right and too much is different for each individual, but generally depends on:

- Your source of motivation or reason for exercise
- How exercise relates to the rest of your life, for instance, a career or sport
- Your attitude toward exercise, your body, and your health

As in many aspects of life, a balanced approach will yield the best results. For further information on this topic, visit www.virginia.edu/ims/fitness

WHAT IS UNHEALTHY EXERCISE?

Healthy exercisers:

- Give adequate time to rest and recover from exertion
- Maintain proper nutrition and hydration levels
- Have regular medical checkups
- Appreciate their bodies
- Keep a healthy attitude toward exercise, realizing that it is only a part of your full and dynamic life
- Find other outlets and activities for energy expenditure such as organized sports, hikes, or dancing

Excessive exercisers tend to:

- Choose exercise beyond the requirements for good health
- Be fanatic about their weight
- Define self worth in terms of exercise routine
- Rarely or never be satisfied with exercise or athletic achievements
- Justify excessive behavior by defining self as a “special” elite athlete
- Use exercise compulsively to control weight
- Experience strong feelings of guilt or anxiety if unable to exercise
- Not allow time off to heal injuries
- Hide from emotional pain by working out

CONSEQUENCES OF UNHEALTHY EXERCISE

By itself, excessive exercise may be dangerous – as dangerous as fasting, bingeing, purging, and/or the use of diet pills and laxatives. Combining compulsive exercise with fasting, bingeing, purging, diet pills, or nutritional supplements known as ‘thermogenic agents’ can lead to a number of serious physical dangers. These include heart rhythm problems, kidney failure, heart attack, and stroke. We encourage you to seek help immediately if this describes you.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND WHO IS SUFFERING FROM DISORDERED EXERCISING AND/OR EATING

There are many things you cannot do to help a family member or friend to get better.

- You cannot force an anorexic to eat.
- You cannot make a compulsive exerciser stop exercising.
- You cannot keep a bulimic from purging.

If you suspect that your loved one suffers from an eating disorder, it is important not to bully, judge or nag. All forms of eating disorders are emotionally based, and the behaviors are symptoms of emotional and stress-related problems (an attempt to control, hide, avoid and forget emotional pain, stress, and/or self-hate).

Unless you are the parent of a minor child with an eating disorder, you cannot force your loved one to seek help. You can gently express your support, encouragement, love, and concern. In most cases, the best thing you can do is to attentively listen.

Each sufferer needs to find the mode of recovery that works best for him or her. There are many options out there, including individual therapy, support groups, in-patient or out-patient treatment clinics, or a combination of these.

Share this brochure, and help your friend or family member to gather information, if they are open to your help. Be there to listen and communicate, reassuring them that recovery is possible!

Most of all, take care of yourself. Remember, even if your initial interaction with a loved-one doesn’t seem successful, you may have planted a seed which will encourage that person to seek help in the future.