



“What A Feeling” – The mental aspects of a wellness program

Submitted by Eric Durak, Wellness @ Home Workshops and The Cancer Wellness Company
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In the 1980s movie “Flash Dance” the title song was “What a Feeling”. It symbolized one dancer’s drive to be successful even when the odds were stacked against her.

Many feel that performing an exercise or wellness program is not “do-able” because the odds are stacked against them as well. There are a few reasons for this, but much of it is mental. Most people who are 60 years old or older have a recollection of physical education class as kickball, softball, and sitting around waiting to be picked. Many of them never experienced the basics of exercise and wellness programs. Now in middle age, they are being asked to participate in programs to improve their health and function, and don’t know where to begin.

The first place would be to learn about the mental aspects of exercise. Most doctors will tell patients to exercise in order to improve cholesterol, or reduce their waistline (or some other physical attribute). However, if you ask most fitness experts, they will ask “how will you feel” when you perform regular exercise? The reason for this attitude? In most well-prescribed exercise programs, the physical changes will happen over time. What most people will experience, however, is a change in their perception of things. They won’t feel as dragged down during the day. They will sleep better. They will be able to do more physical tasks during the day – like lifting groceries, or grandchildren. Things seem easier. When life is easier, you feel better.

This is an aspect of wellness that many people experience, but don’t really feel is an important part of their program. Health promotion research is fairly solid in the emotional and self-perception benefits of exercise. Combined with changes in diet that may reduce body weight and other digestive issues, the mental aspects become even stronger.

These changes include self esteem, self efficacy, self worth, and overall feelings of positive attitude. Fit people are better able to handle stress and in many cases get through the day with less perceived stress.

What about with seniors? They may be retired, and have less stress during their day. This may be true, but their stress may come from the fact that they are losing control of many physical aspects of their lives, and they don’t like it.

Fitness allows them to be in groups of other exercisers. They can socialize. They can move more. They feel better. This aspect of their overall program may be overlooked by some, but in the long run, regular exercise may improve the “feelings” of exercise, and not just improving physical aspects of their overall health.

About the Author

Eric Durak is the President of Medical Health and Fitness in Santa Barbara, CA. He is the director of the Wellness @ Home program for home care professionals, and has worked his entire career in clinical exercise and The Cancer Wellness Company. Eric has produced award winning programs for wellness and fitness in diabetes, cancer, bariatrics, arthritis, and renal disease. He may be reached at 805-451-1745. Visit the their websites: www.MedHealthFit.com www.MyWellnessAtHome.com

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