

Exercise – Good for the Mind, Good for the Body
By Judge Cindy Leos

For as long as I can remember, I have loved to exercise. I started out my running days in Payless sneakers that were all the rage in the 1980s and, other than changing sneakers to something more cushioned for running, I have never looked back.

Studies have shown that finding time to elevate your heart rate and work up a good sweat has exponential pay-offs for not only how long you live, but also how good you feel. Regular exercise helps prevent and manage many health conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes and cancer. It also helps with depression and anxiety.

One thing that some people may not know about exercise is that it actually makes you more resilient to stress. Having stress resilience allows you to handle difficult things in life – whether they be physically difficult things or mentally difficult things. Science has shown that regular, consistent exercise, especially when you do not feel like exercising, actually makes you better equipped to handle the hard things that will inevitably come up in life. In other words, someone who consistently exercises may cope with stress better than someone who does not consistently exercise.

Because I consistently exercise, people often ask me what keeps me motivated. Interestingly, it is not really about motivation. It is about building a habit. Most days I have no interest in working out, but I do it anyway, because I am in a habit. I have found that motivation comes and goes. Maybe you are motivated to exercise because you have an event coming up that you want to look your best for or you are competing in a race you want to win. The problem with these reasons being your “why” for exercising is that the event or race will come and go and you may lose your drive when that moment is over. Shifting your mindset from being “motivated” to exercise to being in the “habit” of exercising may be the ticket to build consistency.

Notwithstanding all the great things that we know about the benefits of exercise and building a habit of exercising, we still often struggle to put on the spandex and hit the gym. I certainly do. When I find myself in that headspace, I give myself a pep talk on why I should do it anyway.

Things that go through my head when I am dreading a workout:

It is easier to stay in shape than it is to get in shape.
Stop thinking about it and just do it.
You know you will feel better.
Stop making excuses.
Sweat first, relax later.

All of us are busy with many obligations in life, but consistently making time for yourself to sweat a little is well worth the investment.

