

2012 New Year Fitness Guide

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Top 10 Super-Small New Year's Resolutions to Create Big, Healthy Change

Bio: Gloria Tsang, RD, founding editor of nutrition network HealthCastle.com and author of a new book, *Go UnDiet: 50 Small Actions for Lasting Weight Loss*. Connect with Gloria @HealthCastleGlo on Twitter.

We've all done it: made a big, fat New Year's resolution that we swore up and down we'd stick to. And we did stick to it – for about six weeks. So what's the secret to making resolutions you can actually stick to throughout the entire year, resulting in real change?

The key is to skip the overambitious resolutions that often leave us miserable and frustrated, and focus on small, achievable resolutions that add up to create long-lasting results. You can't feast your way through the holidays and then expect to give up all sugar on January 1. A goal like that is just not sustainable for the long term.

My book [Go UnDiet](http://GoUnDiet.com) is all about making small changes. I've picked the following 10 little ones, which you can implement all at once or one per week for the first few months of the year:

- **Un-fat-free:** Fat-free foods are often loaded with artificial thickeners and sweeteners to replace the lost fat. They bear little resemblance to real food and are not as satisfying as the real thing, so you're actually inclined to eat more.
- **Un-expect benefits from isolated fiber:** Most products with "added fiber" use isolated fiber. But it doesn't work in the body the same way as natural fiber, and there's little evidence it actually does your body (or diet) much good.
- **Un-drink your calories:** Liquid calories are the number-one reason for our obesity epidemic. A bottle of iced tea has about 200 calories, and an ice cream shop milkshake can hold up to 1,500. Stick to water when you're thirsty, and jazz it up with frozen berries.
- **Be unafraid of meat:** Meat's not the diet villain it's made out to be – if you stick to a 3-oz portion size, in which case even prime rib only has 340 calories. Watch out for significantly larger portions. Remember: A 12-oz steak is four servings!
- **Un-blame carbs:** It's not the bagels and the pasta you need to watch out for, but what you pile on top of them. Carbs themselves are not diet-killers, but mountain-sized portions of butter, cheese, and sour cream are.
- **Un-HPF:** Highly processed foods (HPF) have way more calories than either meat *or* carbs – and they're packed with sodium and artificial additives. Skip these over-engineered foods!
- **Un-source your sugar:** Natural, raw, and agave sugars have been getting a lot of press lately, but the truth is all kinds of sugar have similar calories. Limit your intake of added sugar to 6 teaspoons per day, whether the sugar is "natural" or not.

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- **Un-dashboard dine:** Research shows that mindful eating is more effective for weight loss than following a rigid diet plan – and you're not eating mindfully when you're eating behind the wheel. Make time to eat at the table and learn to recognize your body's signals that it's full.
- **Unburden yourself:** Get help with shopping and cooking from your family, or look into getting your groceries delivered. You're much more likely to eat healthy when it's not a big effort to do so.
- **Un-count calories:** Don't obsess about choosing foods with the lowest calories, for the same reason you should avoid fat-free foods. Focus on foods you enjoy, and savor every bite.

Check out more fun eating tips on <http://www.HealthCastle.com>



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5 Ways to Motivate Yourself to Exercise

Even the most dedicated workout fanatics can have days where they feel unmotivated. Sometimes, we get into a slump where we just don't feel like doing anything. I think we've all been there at some point in time. Below are some tips to help get yourself out of a slump and get your body moving!

1. Find Inspiration. I think this is really important. Being a Figure competitor, my inspiration comes from looking at other Figure competitors. I look how strong and lean their bodies are and that motivates me to work harder at the gym. That inspiration got me motivated to get in great shape and landed me in Oxygen Fitness magazine last year! This was huge for me as Oxygen is my favorite magazine! Find someone or something that inspires you and put your energy into it!

2. Set a goal. Want to lose 10 pounds for a special event, train for a marathon, or build more muscle? Set a goal for yourself. When we get ourselves into a slump, it's usually because we have taken on too much and are feeling overwhelmed. Get rid of things that drain your energy and focus on goals that will create a positive influence in your life.

3. Think about the benefits. When it comes to exercise, people tend to focus on the negatives. I don't have enough energy, I'm tired, it's too cold outside, etc. Instead, try and focus your thoughts on the benefits you'll receive such as having more energy, fitting into your "skinny" jeans, and how good you'll feel when you're done!

4. Have fun. Exercise should be fun! Choose something that you will enjoy doing. My passion is weight training. I get excited when I'm in the gym and I see how strong my body is getting. Try a class that sounds interesting to you, take a long walk with your dog, or grab a friend to workout with you.

5. Accountability. Once you've set some goals for yourself, ask a friend or loved one to be your accountability partner. Tell them what you want to accomplish for a certain time period (day, week, month) and then set a time to check in with them to hold you accountable for reaching each goal. If you don't have anyone available, you can join a fitness forum on-line. There are many forums out there where you can find like-minded or goal oriented people to help you!

Most importantly, keep moving!

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7 Reasons to Start Getting Fit Now

Are you new to exercise? Don't exercise but are considering it? Not really considering it seriously, but know you should make a change? Some people (not you, of course) might think that December is the worst month for starting a get-fit regimen. But those people are wrongy-wrong. It's quite possibly the best month, for these reasons:

1. No-one else is at the gym. People are all out shopping and eating on the run, which means you can run on the treadmills and ellipticals without having to wait. And the gym trainers will be more available to help you figure out how those totally confusing computer programs work on the machines. Yeah, I've been teaching for over 25 years, but still do not know how to program the cursed treadmills. Damn things buck me off every time – video to prove it! * * (*Stay posted for that video in a future post*)

2. It's cold in December.



Exercise makes you warm. Just ask our friend Scott over at Your Inner Skinny. He lives in the part of Canada that no-one goes to on purpose, and it's currently -42C, which is something like -3,956 in Fahrenheit. So get moving, you'll warm up. Hug sweaty Canadians! Then steal their down parkas.

3. It's the gifting season, and what better gift is there than making yourself healthier, which means you'll probably live longer, and your kids will have you around for a long time, and you'll be able to do stuff with them without getting exhausted, and your insurance will cost less, and you'll feel and look better and you'll get so strong and energetic that you'll have the strength to read this very long, "make your high school English teacher crazy" run-on sentence.

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4. Your stress levels will go down. Yup, exercise reduces stress. Even if you're "downright out of shape," as this Mayo Clinic article states. Holiday Season = Stress Hits the Up Elevator. Exercise = Stress Hits the Down Elevator. So basically, if you are a fan of higher math like I am, that means December will be just as relaxing as the beach in July once you start exercising.

5. You can get a good spot in the group exercise classes before the New Year's crowd gets in the room. And everyone is in a festive mood, so they'll be even more welcoming than usual. Instructor ad right here – professional group fitness instructors are always welcoming, and they set a good example for "their" students, so in truth you'll be welcomed year-round. But they'll share their eggnog and smile when they ask your name in December.

6. You will avoid the somewhat unrealistic (cough, cough) expectation that you can get fit on the morning of December 31st in time for the evening's party. Much more realistic (as in "not really") is to start a wee bit sooner. Since you can safely sustain a weight loss of 1 ½ to 2 pounds per week, if you start today you will be about 6 or 7 pounds lighter by New Year's. If you're thinking, "Hey, my goal is 35 pounds. What good is 6 or 7," my answer is this – you'll be 1/6th (oh, crap, math again. Yes, I estimated) of the way there. But, your outlook and how you feel will be 75% of the way there, because research (our BFF) says that you will start to view yourself as an exerciser, which means your habits will change to meet that self-image. In straight-talk, that means you'll feel like a total hottie at the party. That is way cool!



Just Lift the Word "After" Over Your Head 10 Times A Day to Look Like This

(continued...)

7. You will save money. You will have more energy. You will look better. You will feel better. You will meet a lot of cool people. Your math skills will improve. You'll get an end of year tax deduction...One of these may be false. Hint: Exercise makes you smarter, so it's actually quite possible your math skills will improve. For example, I was going to write 10 Reasons, but got bogged down when I carried the 1, multiplied the 0, subtracted the junk food, added the Lycra and Voila!!!, ended up with 7 Reasons!

Remember December as the month you did the Zoom Zoom for your Boom Boom! If you come to Santa Barbara, we'll even let you into our classes for free!

Twins and international fitness experts, Kymberly Williams-Evans, MA and Alexandra Williams, MA have been in the fitness industry since the first aerobics studio opened--with them--on the European continent and before leg warmers and thong leotards were the rage. They teach, write, edit, emcee and present their programs worldwide on land, sea and airwaves. Kymberly is former faculty for the Dept of Exercise and Sports Studies at University of California Santa Barbara: Alexandra is an editor and writer for IDEA: The Association for Health and Fitness Professionals. You can catch them on their Fun and Fit radio show aired online on <http://www.womensradio.com> at events you hire them to speak or emcee at, and on their website <http://www.funandfit.org>

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Tips for New Runners

About eight years ago, I got into running. I wish I had some inspiring story about it, but really? I was mostly just bored. I'd been out of college for a few years and was working an uninspiring desk job. When I saw a sign in the mall for a local 5k, I decided that I was going to do it, despite the fact that I'd spent most of my life desperately avoiding running in all its many forms. I still can't tell you what came over me, but somehow? It stuck. That 5k turned into another which turned into a half marathon and then a marathon and I'm still going strong, despite a rough patch of several injuries. I've recently had the unique opportunity to get back to my beginning running roots as I had knee surgery earlier this year. Between the injury which required the surgery and the recovery from the procedure itself, I've basically had to start over. However, I've learned a thing or two over the past several years, and I'm here to share that with you. Whether you've already found your running groove or are still working up to it, here's a few tips to help you down that road.

-Don't overdo it: It's tempting to jump in full-throttle and say you're going to run every day, but start with just 30 minutes, three times a week. It doesn't sound like a lot, but, believe it or not, it's enough to get you in shape to run a 5k. If you want to work out more often than three times a week, mix running up with something like strength training, yoga, swimming, or biking. That'll keep your body moving but give you some time to recover in between runs.

Also on that note, don't jump in and try to run for 30 minutes solid your first time out. Partly because this is harder than it sounds, even if you're in fantastic shape. However, the biggest problem here is that running can be very hard on your joints, especially if your body isn't used to it. Starting with a walk/run program (I really like this one (http://www.coolrunning.com/engine/2/2_3/181.shtml) from CoolRunning (<http://www.coolrunning.com/index.shtml>)) lets your body gradually adapt to the stresses of running while you improve your aerobic fitness.

-Have a plan: OK, so you're going to run three times a week. You've got your run/walk program picked out. Instead of winging it, pick your three "run" days ahead of time and mark them on your calendar. If you can, go one step further and decide what time you'll go running on those days and put that in your calendar as well. Ideally, you'll be able to run the same three days every week around the same time. That sort of consistency will make it that much easier to incorporate running into your life and make it part of your routine. However, when you're looking at your schedule and trying to figure out where running fits in....

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-Be realistic: Getting up at 5 a.m. to run before work may be the easiest way to add it to your schedule, but if you're the sort of person who is hitting the snooze button and dragging yourself out of bed 10 minutes before you have to leave the house? Early morning running is probably not going to be something that you're going to enjoy. Or stick with. Try running right after work or on your lunch hour. Unless you're a super-heavy sweater, a quick wipe down with some baby wipes and a fresh application of deodorant will get you clean enough to return to the office for the afternoon.

-Celebrate your successes (i.e., bribe yourself): Reward yourself for sticking to your program. Treat yourself to a pedicure or a cute new piece of workout gear after your first couple of weeks. Been sticking with it for a month or two? Invest in some good running shoes or sign up for that local 5k you've been eyeing. You don't even have to be able to run the whole thing to participate. Every 5k I've ever done has had a healthy dose of walkers. Run what you can, walk when you need to, and enjoy the experience.

A quick note on running shoes: I firmly believe that if you're going to be running or walking on a regular basis, it's worth it to invest in a good pair of shoes. However, as most pairs of running or walking shoes can set you back \$100, it doesn't always fit into the budget. Feel free to run in whatever you have to get started, but once it becomes clear that this is something you're going to stick with? Head to a specialty running store (not a big-box general sports store) and get yourself fitted in something designed for running. Not only will your feet thank you, but running in the right shoes can also reduce the risk of injuries to your knees, hips and back.

-But don't get discouraged by your failures: Everyone has bad weeks. Sometimes life, work, illness or some unholy combination of all of them can get in the way and throw you off your new routine. Don't sweat it. Whether you've missed a day or a week (or more..... seriously, it happens to all of us), jump back into it as soon as you can. Maybe you need to go back and repeat a week or two of your run/walk program. That's fine. Maybe you've got a super-busy day and you can only get out for 15 minutes instead of 30. That's fine, too. Really, the only failure is giving up completely. As long as you can get back into the swing of things - even if it means starting your program over from step 1 - you're doing awesome.

-Expect it to suck sometimes: I know, I'm supposed to be helping you, not scaring you, but this is a very important lesson we all have to learn. Whether you've been running for 2 days or 20 years, there are always going to be runs that just flat out suck. Maybe you're tired or hungover, or maybe the yardwork you did yesterday just zapped everything out of your legs, or maybe there's absolutely no reason for it but, man, you are just NOT feeling it today. It's fine. It doesn't mean that running isn't for you or that it's never going to get better. It's just one of those things, and as cheesy as it sounds, the bad runs make the good ones seem that much better.

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However, if you've had a string of bad runs for several days in a row, it could be a sign that you're overdoing it. Take a few extra days of rest and re-examine your routine. If you're working out on your non-running days, make one or two of those days a total rest day. If you are resting on those non-running days, either step back a week or repeat the current week of your run/walk plan until your body catches up. Lastly, make sure you're getting enough sleep and that you're not coming down with anything. I've discovered that the first sign of an impending cold is a series of really crappy runs. (For the ladies: I've also discovered that Aunt Flo can make you feel like complete crap during any sort of exercise. Don't be afraid to take a week off and let it pass.)

-Give your body time to recover: I talked a bit about this above, but making sure your body has enough time and rest to recover in between runs is so important, I'm going to mention it again. It's also the hardest thing to get beginners to do, because they're afraid that they'll either lose all the fitness they've worked so hard for or that their entire routine will fall apart if they stop for some reason. Relax. Taking a week off because you have a cold will not make that much of a difference in the grand scheme of things. Besides, would you rather spend a week not running and resting while the cold passes through quickly, or three weeks having really bad runs while the cold lingers?

-You're already a "real" runner: It doesn't matter if you do a million races in your life or none. It doesn't matter if you can run for 20 miles without stopping or if you always take a walk break every 3 minutes. If you have the desire and motivation to lace up those shoes and get your body moving? You're a runner. Welcome to the club.

About Dawn:

Dawn is a certified triathlon coach and physical therapy student living just outside of Seattle. When she's not running or studying, she can be found hanging out with her husband and their two cats. She blogs about balancing school, life and everything else and offers coaching services at her site Running at Dawn (<http://runningatdawn.com>). You can also find her on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/TriCoachDawn>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/RunningAtDawn>).



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The story of Whale Tails Chips

We all desire to feel good about snacking. We want our snacks to have simple natural ingredients and we want our choice to reflect our socially responsible values as a conscience consumer. We love when we are able to tell others what we have found and how that experience met or exceeded our expectations.

Whale Tails Tortilla Chips, a company started in the kitchen of a beach side home, shares our very same desires and values. The company has an innovative chip design, three dangerously delicious flavors, and an open invitation to join them in a philanthropic adventure that helps fund ocean conservation.

In 2011 Whale Tails developed and brought to market two new flavor profiles, Hawaiian BBQ and Blue Corn with Chia that complemented their original flavor, Alaea Hawaiian Sea Salt which is a blend of the trace mineral- rich Alaea from the Island of Molokai and sun harvested sea salt. The gourmet Hawaiian sea salt blended with Alaea gives the chips a distinct earthy flavor while decreasing the sodium content. The Hawaiian BBQ has a wonderful flavor enhanced by a trace of mango that makes it sweet and spicy. The addition of Blue Corn infused with organic Chia seeds (an ancient Mayan Superseed) created a chip that is rich in Omega-3, more fiber than Flax and contains more antioxidants than blueberries. According to Dr. Weil, 1 tablespoon of Chia Seeds would keep an Aztec warrior going for 24 hours.

Sitting on the board of Whale Tails Tortilla Chips and helping to guide the company's philanthropic efforts is Mr. Walter Munk, Professor of Geophysics Emeritus. Mr Munk was elected to the National Academy of the Sciences in 1956 and has received numerous awards for his work in pioneering and understanding earth's dynamics. His research has built the foundation for the studies of man's impact on ocean circulation and wind-driven gyres. "Professor Munk brings great insight and practical thinking to our company and its efforts to become a resource for worldwide support of ocean conservation and education." stated Terry Kraszewski, Co Founder and CEO.

When it comes to innovative packaging - Whale Tails has been on the forefront of looking for solutions to plastic waste. While some of their largest competitors have supported the use of PLA (Genetically Modified Corn) and challenging composting issues, Whale Tails has taken a different approach. The current Whale Tails Chip packaging developed by TekPak Solutions of Canada is 69% OMNIDEGRADABLE. You can learn more about the company's amazing journey for a truly ocean friendly bag film at their website : <http://www.whaletailschips.com>

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Whale Tails and international marine artist Wyland are now working together through educational programs, public arts projects and community events that promote, protect and preserve the ocean, waterways and marine life . Whale Tails Tortilla Chips is proudly supporting the Wyland Foundation's efforts with ten percent of every bag purchased going directly to the non profit foundation.

Whale Tails is also proud of their recent accomplishment as a Whole Foods Market Local Producer Loan Recipient. These loans are only granted to companies that meet Whole Foods Markets strict criteria for sustainable and socially responsible business practices.

Food choices matter and what we chose affects both our bodies and our planet. Whale Tails Tortilla Chips is a truly delicious choice to live healthy and "Go Organic"



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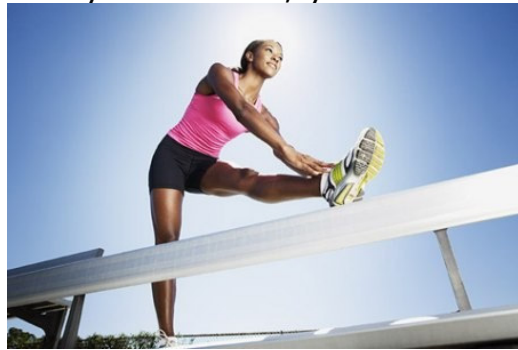
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The Do's and Dont's of Running

With the New Year settling in around us we are all about starting new routines and setting good habits. Maybe your goal is to eat healthier, workout regularly, get more sleep or spend more time with your family. Regardless of your goal it is the perfect time to re-evaluate your running routine. Let's take a look at some do's and some don'ts of running so your routine is only helping you to reach your goal!

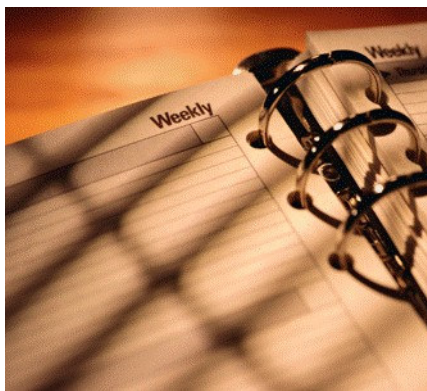
Stretch.

Do you stretch before a run or after a run? Good question. Today it is not recommended to do static stretching before runs. This is when you would slowly extend your muscle and hold it. This can lead to injuries while running. Instead look to dynamic stretching. You should be thinking high knees, toe touches, and butt kicks! You should especially do this if you run first thing in the morning or after a long period of inactivity. Trust me; your muscles will thank you!



Schedule.

Many runners out there love their schedules. They like knowing that Sunday is their long run, they have an easy run to recover, a middle distance workout or maybe a track workout. The reality is though that our bodies don't work on a schedule. Some weeks we are tired and need more rest and other weeks we can handle more stress. Learn to let go of your schedule and listen to your body and adjust your plan accordingly. It is all about good, quality miles.



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Weights.

We all admire the elite runners who are thin and ripped. Unfortunately (or fortunately!) that is not a realistic body composition for the majority of the population. Running without lifting is not ideal. You should be doing strength training at least twice a week. According to Runner's World, "Studies have found that resistance training can improve your running economy, which reduces the amount of energy it takes to run at a given pace." Hit the gym to target both your upper body and legs. Try push-ups, dips, lunges, and squats.



Ditch the Garmin.

If you are like me you are addicted to your Garmin. The truth is being addicted to it is not helping your running. It decreases your proprioception, or your body's ability to gauge your speed and movement. Try running without your Garmin to judge your speed or set it and then don't look at it during your run. Go back and compare the speed you thought your body was running to what the Garmin recorded. This will help you to better understand your body. Do this multiple times each week for best results.



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Rest after Long Runs.

Taking a rest day after your long runs is not always the best. Some people experience soreness and muscle tiredness two days after a long run rather than the next day. If you are one of those people consider switching your rest day. Try doing your long run and then the next day do your recovery run. Take two rest days to give your body ample time to recover. You may find that your body likes this best!



Running Goal Pace on Long Runs.

It makes sense to try to push your pace so you're running at goal pace during your long runs. The reality is that you are doing more harm than good to your body! Pushing the pace can fatigue your body and muscles making for a longer recovery time. Try running 2 to 3 minutes slower than your goal pace.



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Following these guidelines can help you to run faster, stay healthier and be stronger in 2012! Learning to fine tune your training, workouts and routines can help you take your running to the next level. Set your sights on a goal or a race for this upcoming year and try some of these tips to help you accomplish it!

Whitney is the blogger behind <http://www.LiveRunLoveYoga.com> She shares her lessons and experiences from years of running and yoga, the foods that fuel her and bits and pieces from a healthy lifestyle. She will be running the 2012 Boston Marathon with The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and is currently studying for her NASM Personal Trainer Certification. She is a FitFluential Ambassador. Visit <http://www.LiveRunLoveYoga.com> to read more about her and check out her regular posts!



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Breaking through Plateaus

It takes a lot of time and effort to work towards fitness related goals. When things don't progress how you hope, an overwhelming sense of frustration can set in. Plateaus can throw a wrench in even the most determined person's determination.

So, what happens when *ZERO* changes happen for an extended period of time? Try the following steps to help bust through that plateau...or, keep one from happening if you haven't faced one yet.

Have Room To Progress

Do not nose-dive into a fitness plan with the top intensity, highest level of dietary restriction, or the most challenging plan from the beginning. That can only lead to burn out. The body is extremely intelligent. It will adapt to even the most challenging plans with time...*and then where do you go?* Instead, try to start with small, reasonable changes to build up healthier habits, remain consistent with them, and have options to tweak the plan as your body grows stronger.

Take A Break

Allow the body to take it easy on workouts for a week. Eat a bit more. Don't stress over goals. By the end of the break, you should feel rejuvenated and ready to take on your goals with a new, stronger intensity. The stress from eating less, working hard, or just fretting over goals can inhibit the body's progress greatly. So, by allowing the body rest and recovery, it can regain momentum and reciprocate with future progress.

Look Closely at the Little Details

Sometimes the small things we do add up to make a bigger impact than we imagine. We know that our training and eating habits have an impact on progress and will readily look to them when facing stalls. However, we also must consider our other habits. Take a look at the other details of your health to determine what areas can use any improvement. Are you drinking enough water? Are you getting enough sleep? Are you staying active in other ways throughout the day? Are you stressing too much? Are you facing hormonal changes? Those things have key roles and need to be in order for progress to happen.

Track It

It doesn't need to be drastic, but a few simple protocols can help you get back on track to your goals. Measure your food to make sure you are taking proper serving sizes. Count calories for a week or two to see if there any areas to tweak. Stay mindful of extra bites of food while cooking. Pay attention to help prevent any subtle habits that could be derailing your efforts.

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Add Another Gear

Up. The. Intensity! Try to push yourself out of your comfort zone to maximize results and get the ball moving again. When the body gets into a routine, it can easily sail through workouts out of habit. To avoid this, try to mix up or increase the challenge of your workouts every 6-8 weeks. You can either try something new, add in more intervals, shoot for new distances, vary up your strength training routines, or pull out workouts that always challenge you in a good way. Work harder and smarter.

Ride It Out With Positive Thoughts

If all else fails, you simply have to stay positive. **If you *know* you have done everything possible to keep a balanced approach to eating, training, and caring for your health, then you can only be patient.** Respecting your body will bring it just where it should be for health. Let it happen naturally. Picture your goals and keep working hard. Surprisingly enough, staying positive and committed ends up bringing the desired results down the line. After all, when reaching this point there are only two options: to either keep chugging away with determination or give up and say forget it. One of those choices won't help you achieve your goal...so why not just dig deep, ride it out, and trust? It can only bring positive results.



Find Tina Reale, a NASM certified trainer, at her website – [Best Body Fitness](http://www.tinareale.com). (<http://www.tinareale.com>) Tina has a passion for making healthy living achievable, approachable, and fun for all. She does this through sharing her life and personal fitness journey, as well as through her online personal training services. Tina lives in the Atlanta area with her husband and two kids. In 2012, Tina hopes to run her first full marathon and maintain the 30+ pounds she lost post-pregnancy in 2011.



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Let's Talk and Walk

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Come visit me at Let's Talk and Walk where I do a lot of talking about anything and everything, walking (when the weather is nice), and more. I am a 40ish female trying to get healthy through a balanced diet, exercise, and of course, having fun.

Four Tips For Exercise Enthusiasts

If you are a “newbie” in the fitness game, the tips that follow are certain to get you off on the right foot in your fitness journey. And even if you’ve been in the game for a number of years, I think there’s a tip or two in this article that you’ll be able to take with you, to help you reach your fitness goals.

Tip #1 – Nutrition Is King!

Everyone wants a nice, lean, sexy mid-section. And I don’t blame people for this! BUT, in order to get better abs, direct ab work is NOT the main factor in getting you there. Sure, working your abs will *contribute* to a good looking core. But as the saying goes, “the real battle is with the knife and fork.” Nutrition is key! You can have the strongest core in the world, but if there is a layer (or two) of fat covering it, all the hard work that you put in will NOT matter (from an appearance standpoint). Taking it a step further, the “trio” is the fastest way to a set of abs that turn heads at the beach. The trio is the combination of proper nutrition, weight training, and cardio. No gimmicks, just consistent good old-fashioned hard work and discipline in the kitchen!

Tip #2 – You Do NOT Need A High Volume Of “Direct” Core Work

In tip #1 above, I mentioned, “direct” core work. Direct core work would be exercises like reverse crunches, plank variations, and the ab wheel (to name a few). Some direct core work is needed for optimal strength and health. BUT, if you “brace” your core (as if you were preparing to take a punch) with every exercise you perform, your core is ALWAYS getting worked – as long as you are performing big-bang-for-your-buck-movements. I’m referring to exercises such as chin-ups, deadlifts, and push-ups. Doing these movements with a braced core really hammers your mid-section. So, there is no need for set after set and set of direct core exercises. Performing a few sets of direct ab exercises two to three times per week is plenty.

Tip #3 – Listen To Those With More Experience, But Do NOT Turn Off Your Thinking Cap

Experience in any facet of life can be very helpful. When it comes to fitness, it is no different. Having conversations with people that have “been there, done that,” and learning from them can help save you time and frustration en route to your fitness goals. However, each person is different. Your experienced fitness buddy might tell you that; “reverse grip lat pulldowns are THE BEST exercise for building a great back.” And this may be the case – for him! But that doesn’t mean it is for you and your body. You will never know until you experiment for yourself. Maybe seated cable rows end up giving you better results. So again, listen and learn from those more experienced, but don’t do so blindly.

(continued...)

Tip #4 - Females, You NEED TO Put a BIGGER Emphasis On Weight Training

I'd guess that I'm talking to 90 percent of you females out there. Cardio takes up too much of a percentage of your fitness program. Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against cardio. But I do value weight training THAT MUCH. And you should too. If you want to really change your body, weight training is very powerful. And if you are choosing the right exercises (see tip #2 above), your heart rate WILL be elevated. This means that you will get a "cardio-effect" when lifting weights. Bottom line, if you are performing hours of cardio per week, it is going to be very difficult to give weight training the attention it deserves. I'm not asking you to stop performing cardio, but I am asking you to shift your emphasis more towards resistance training. And if you are a part of the 10% that is already doing this, good for you!

Use these four tips to help take your health and physique to the next level. Happy training!

Danny McLarty has been a fitness coach for over ten years. He is a certified strength and conditioning specialist (CSCS). He is also a basketball skills coach and was inducted into the Illinois Basketball Hall of Fame to honor his high school and college career. Danny feels that "there is no 'magic trick' to improving your health and physique; train, eat, sleep, and repeat," he says. "Those that are consistent, disciplined, and give everything they have, can bring their health, physique, and performance to a new level." Danny is a contributor to for Sears FitStudio as well as a FitFluential Ambassador. You can learn more about Danny at his website, <http://www.DannyMcLarty.com>

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Cold Running

This morning I woke up **GRUMPY!** It was cold. It was dreary. And work starting calling me at 6 AM...things were not looking good. It was feeling like one of *those* days. UGH!

But I had a running date tonight, Toronto got its first dusting of snow, and this girl got some pretty wicked cold weather running gear for her birthday...so by 5 PM all was well in my world again. I bundled up in my new snazzy layers, took to the mean city streets, and loved every minute of it.

So what is it about running in these cooler temps that leaves me feeling refreshed and fabulous?!

Well to start, it is pretty well known that exercise floods you with feel good endorphins. But did you know that because your body has to work harder in the cold, your endorphin levels get that extra boost. So when you finish your cold weather workout you feel that extra bit happier. Definitely a bonus for this stressed-out crazy-pants. Running has been helping me stay sane and restore the balance in my crazy little life. So needless to say a bigger endorphin boost is probably a necessary perk!

I have known for a long time that my ticker performs better in the cooler weather, so I have always favored the winter run (or at least the cool-ish weather run). But *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* recently published an article trumpeting the effects of the chilly workout. Your body has to work harder to stay warm; so you are more likely to run faster and burn more calories. WOOHOO! All good news in my books (especially as a Canadian gal)!

And as I head into the busy holiday season I can see the benefits of all these jazzy cold weather running side-effects. So this month you can find me bundled up, braving the elements, and utilizing those extra endorphins!

Will you be joining me??



I'm Krysten, from "[The Misadventures of a Darwinian Fail](http://darwinianfail.blogspot.com)" (<http://darwinianfail.blogspot.com>) I am health nut and fitness enthusiast, and am generally in love with all things running, spinning, and yoga related. This year I am trying to overcome my less than stellar genetics by dedicating 2012 to eating a clean diet and focusing on my general wellbeing. I plan to beat heart disease, breast cancer, and genetics all while striving for coveted half marathon and marathon glory.

Less is More

Moving to a minimalist shoe is smart—if you do it right.

Minimalist running has taken off like wildfire over the past couple of years. And while I am a big proponent and executor myself, I also know it's not an easy change. Too much too soon (TMTS) is a common term you'll hear thrown around the minimalist circles, and for good reason.

Running with less shoe, or no shoe, can lead to improved form and potentially fewer injuries. But it's easy to get sucked into TMTS and become injured. I know—I did it myself. But I'm healthy now and have learned a more conservative approach is what it takes to make the successful transition. If you've decided less is more with your running, here are my tips for doing it successfully:

- Spend lots of time barefoot in your day-to-day routine. Any chance you get to walk around outside in your bare feet, do. This helps with proprioception—the connection between your feet and your brain and also helps strengthen the feet for running. Do this for several weeks before attempting to run barefoot or in minimalist shoes.
- Take it slowly. When you do start incorporating some minimalist or barefoot running into your routine, make it a very small portion of your overall miles. Those first few jaunts should be only about 1/8 to 1/4 of a mile.
- Do the barefoot or minimalist portion of your run first, before putting your traditional shoes back on. This helps train the muscle memory to proper form, which hopefully will carry over to the remainder of your run.
- If you do go fully barefoot (and I recommend you try it!) do it on pavement. Pavement allows you to see where you are stepping, thus avoiding any obstacles/hazards. You also need to land correctly on the pavement. In the soft grass you can get away with more.
- Look into barefoot running drills to help your form. These can be found in several places, including the Natural Running Center (www.naturalrunningcenter.com) and VivoBarefoot's site (www.vivobarefoot.com).

If you'd like more information, there's lots out there to be had. Jason Robillard's Barefoot Running Book and [web site](#), as well as [Michael Sandler's](#) Barefoot Running are both great resources. Also, check out [Two Rivers Treads](#), and this article on [Toe Salad](#).

(continued...)

Learning to run barefoot or trying to change your running form to a "natural" form is not something for the impatient. Expect it to take you the better part of a year. If you're not willing to invest the time, my advice would be to stay away from it or you'll likely end up on the DL. Since minimalist running is supposed to be all about avoiding injuries, it's well worth the time and effort. Good luck!

Amanda Loudin is a freelance writer, running coach, and the voice behind the MissZippy1 blog, a site for runners seeking experienced advice, the latest running news, and a fun exchange of all things running related.

Amanda has been running and competing in triathlons for 14 years now. Her athletic experience includes nine marathons, an Ironman, and literally hundreds of other races.

As a writer, Amanda's work has appeared in Weight Watchers magazine, the IronGirl newsletter, and many other regional and national fitness-related publications.

Amanda's philosophy is that fitness is a journey and she loves sharing her passion with readers, fellow athletes, and running clients alike.

Women and Resistance Training

There is a myth that exists that women who engage in resistance training will become big and bulky like their male counterparts. This is in fact a myth. The primary anabolic ("building up") hormones involved in building muscle tissue is testosterone, growth hormone and insulin-like growth factor or IGFs. I will focus on testosterone. Testosterone can influence this building state by interacting with other hormones, influencing the nervous system and finally directly on skeletal muscle itself (1). Testosterone follows the path of tagging along with proteins until they reach androgen receptor sites, which binds to DNA and ultimately induces protein synthesis or muscle building (1). Now women have about 15 to 20 times lower resting concentrations of testosterone than men do (1). There have been studies to show that while women exhibit testosterone increases post resistance training, those increases are significantly smaller than men (2,3). So, with the platform set to the main reasons why women will not become "bulky", here is your first reason as to why women should engage in resistance training:

Reason #1 -Promote fat loss - A study of women ages 40 to 55 years found that women lifting at higher intensities (more weight) had increased post exercise energy expenditure (4). This means that they burned more calories. This was also found to be true in younger women athletes (5).

Reason #2 – Preserve muscle quality – There are age-associated reductions in strength that are primarily due to decline in muscle quantity and quality. These declines may lead to higher risks of frailty and dependence. A study of young and elderly women concluded that resistance training was successful in preserving the quality of muscle during aging.

(continued...)

Reason #3 – Lower blood pressure - In a study of highly trained, moderately trained and untrained women, those women that were highly resistance trained exhibited the lowest systolic blood pressure values. The combination of resistance training with cardiovascular training may seem best to lower blood pressure.

(continued...)

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Brent Hartman

Brent earned his Bachelor of Science degree in exercise physiology from East Stroudsburg University; Master of Science degree in exercise science from East Stroudsburg University; and his personal training certifications from National Strength and Conditioning Association and the American Council on Exercise.

Additionally, he is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist. His experiences have varied from cardiac rehabilitation to Division I football.

Brent enjoys working with diverse populations and meeting the various needs of his clients. When helping clients Brent uses an individualized approach to ensure proper progression for clients of all fitness levels. He loves seeing clients succeed in accomplishing their goals and the happiness that it brings to them.

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[Fashletics](#) is a collection of handmade jewelry inspired by a passion for fitness, competition, and a strong desire to empower others who have made a commitment to a fit and healthy lifestyle. Each piece of jewelry serves a badge of honor and an expression of strength.

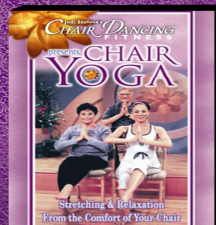
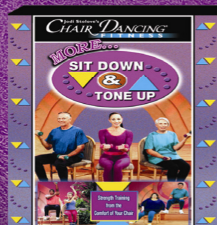
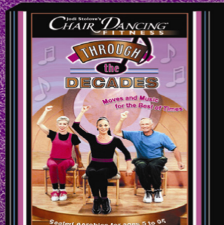
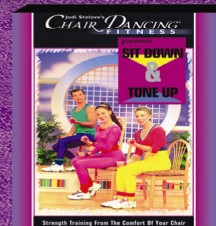
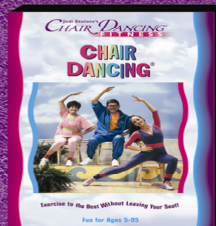
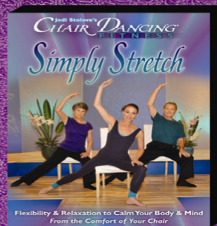
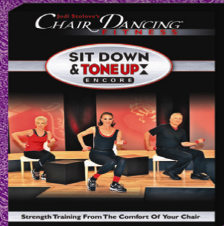
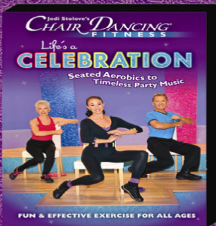
Fashletics is based in Miami, FL. All pieces are designed and created by Sarah Wilson who is a certified CrossFit trainer at South Florida CrossFit Endurance. Sarah is also a nationally ranked endurance athlete who competes for Team USA at the World level in the sport of Duathlon. One of the only things that rivals her interest in athletics is her strong desire to design and create. Sarah is an established jewelry designer and has been working as a metalsmith for nearly 10 years.

Ultimately, Fashletics is the result of the combination of two distinct interests. Sarah is as much an athlete as she is an artist. She takes pride in the craftsmanship of her designs and works hard create jewelry pieces that celebrate and inspire the athlete within.

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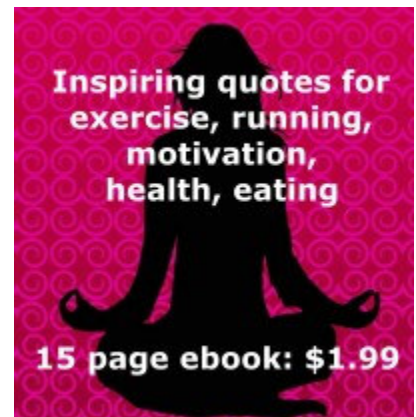
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How To Survive the Holidays Without Gaining Weight

The holiday season is here...

holiday cheer...

happiness, joy, glee, merry, food, lots of food, parties, lots of parties

shopping, wrapping gifts, working, going to more parties...

Where does the working out and exercise come into your schedule though?

If you have time for shopping and wrapping and all that other stuff, you [have time](#) to work out!

You don't want to end the year with a stomach like Santa that jiggles like a bowl full of jelly, right?

You can survive and enjoy the holidays without gaining weight.

Yes, you **can**!



Some of these may seem like common sense but like we know, common sense isn't so *common*.

1) Don't skip breakfast! Make sure you fuel your body with nutrient rich foods in the morning to keep you going so you won't overeat or grab some *junk* to fuel your body when it begins to slow down.

2) Prior to going to any holiday parties, have a snack that way you're not starving when you get to the party and end up over indulging. Enjoy some fruit, yogurt, apple or rice cake with peanut butter on it (yum!)...

3) Make time to exercise. Make it a priority. Do not say you're too busy. There's always time to fit in some type of physical activity...even if it's only 10 mins in morning, or during your lunch break, or a quick workout of any type in the evening...just make sure you keep active. If you're active now...maintain that schedule or even add an additional workout in so you can indulge a bit when it comes to holiday foods & desserts you want.

(continued...)

4) Get some activity in during your normal daily errands, work, etc...

-When shopping park your car far from the store (which may be your only option anyhow depending on how busy it is—just be aware of your surroundings especially at dark).

-While standing in line, do calf raises or squats.

-Use the stairs in the mall instead of elevators or escalators.

-Carry your bags to your car instead of using a shopping cart.



5) Wear a tight shirt or pants so you will be more conscious of your appearance and not want to over eat like you might do if you had on a loose baggy shirt or dress.

6) Be aware of what you're nibbling on and grazing on. A little of this and a little of that can add up quickly during the day and you won't even realize it. You might want to keep a food journal (great for accountability as well as using as a reference point to see what and how much you really do consume during the day).

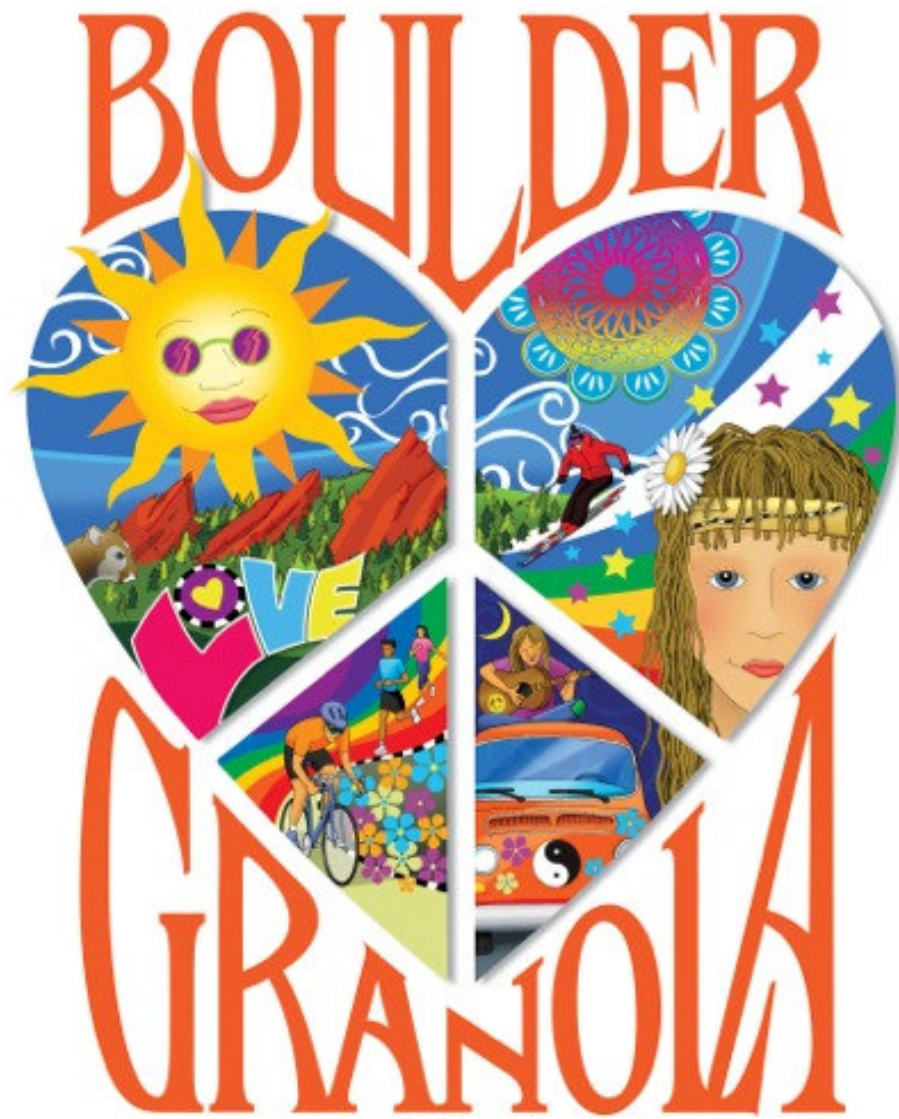
7) Limit alcohol. It's full of calories and if you have more than you *should*, your judgment will be off and you may end up doing all kinds of things you will regret (including overdoing it in the food, dessert department as well).

8) Allow yourself a small serving of dessert or your favorite food. You will enjoy it and not feel deprived which could lead to overeating other foods to compensate and still leave you craving that special item. Be selective, if you're going to splurge do it on items you don't normally have access to.

9) Say no. You do not have to attend every party you're invited to nor do you have to taste every food that is offered to you. Politely decline.

10) Release the guilt. If you do go overboard, don't stress it...just get back on track and put the past behind you!

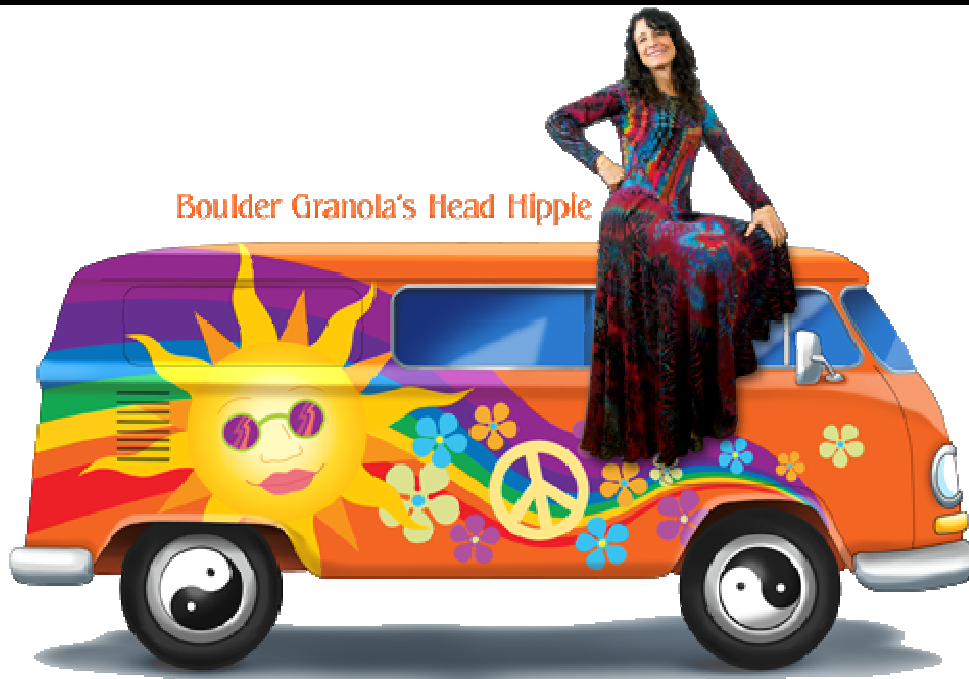
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Boulder Granola

Boulder Granola, celebrates the reknowned counter-culture of our groovy and colorful hometown of Boulder, Colorado. That's right, it embraces Boulder's granola-crunching reputation. Reveling in the fun-loving, free spirit of this beautiful little town inspires us to create every loving spoonful of Boulder Granola with you in mind.

Boulder Granola is made from the very best quality, organic ingredients. In each bowl, you'll taste Boulder's fresh air, smell the blue skies, and feel the warmth of the sun-drenched Rocky Mountains recharging your body, mind and spirit.

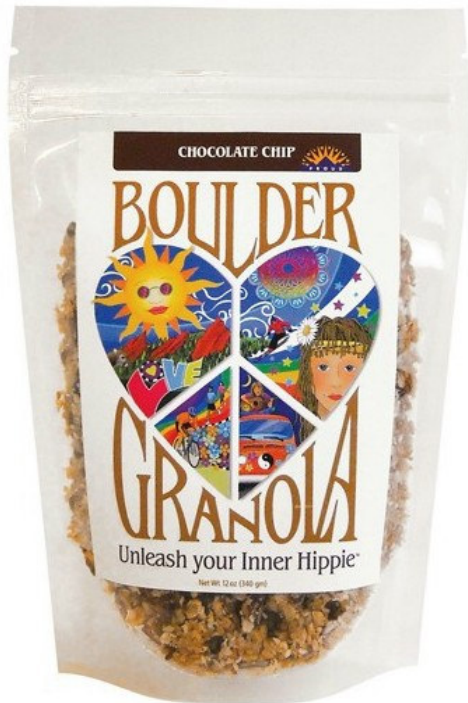
It's 1969 . . .

Or as we call it, "The Summer of Granola." My mom has just changed her name from Florence to Samantha (it was the 60s, you know), burned her bra, and spent the summer in Sensitivity Training (personal growth program) with my dad. And that's when it happened – her first batch of granola. She started with a simple but delicious recipe she served us each morning with fresh milk and bananas. Over the next few years, the kitchen was never the same. New ingredients, new baking techniques, each one impossibly better than the next. Each batch a true labor of love.

Finally the day came when my mom handed the recipe over to me and just like her, nothing gave me greater pleasure than sharing it with my friends. Birthdays, holidays, any type of celebration . . . everybody wanted my granola and how could I possibly refuse? And so . . . it began.

When I left the east coast more than twenty years ago, like so many of my new Boulder neighbors, I knew that my family had found the place we would call home for the rest of our days. I raised my three children here and we all thrived in this creative, adventurous, outgoing community. (continued...)

Infused with the Mojo of Boulder, my granola blossomed. Made entirely from nothing but organic ingredients, and full of protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, it supports and promotes healthy, active bodies. And, most importantly, fun.



And now, after almost 25 years of parenting, I am facing the inevitable "empty nest." Being a mother was and will continue to be the most fulfilling and wonderful part of my life, but I have all this extra time and energy! So I'm devoting it to my other child, Boulder Granola – along with incorporating all of the things I've learned over the years, both in the kitchen and out, in order to **unleash my inner Hippie!**

What does that mean you might ask? It means taking the grooviest part of those "anything is possible" days of the '60s, adding years of experience, spicing it up with newfound wisdom, to unveil your modern day Hippie values.

My philosophy is simple. Simple ingredients, delicious pure love. And like all things in Boulder, it's a community effort. I, and my staff, work with as many local sources as possible to create a fulfilling work environment for everyone who lends a hand in creating our special oats. And Boulder Granola offers a full line of "ORGANIC certified gluten-free oats" granola for anyone with gluten sensitivities so that everyone can enjoy the delicious and nutritious taste of these granolas.

Because Boulder Granola is infused with the heart and essence of Boulder, I hope you'll meditate, radiate, celebrate, satiate, contemplate, motivate, and activate your modern-day inner Hippie. Samantha does. She still makes granola – and she and I share our recipe ideas to this day.







By the way, did you know that HIPPIE is an acronym meaning Happy, Intelligent People Pursuing Infinite Enlightenment. The pursuit of enlightenment.... that's a good thing, right? I can dig it. Can you?




These may not be the reasons that normally come to mind but they're the ones I'm going with in this post!

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-  BOOSTS DECISION-MAKING SKILLS
-  PROMPTS GROWTH OF NEW NERVE CELLS AND BLOOD VESSELS
-  IMPROVES MULTI-TASKING AND PLANNING



Men'sHealth

(continued...)

Gives you a feeling of accomplishment



Makes you happy.
Endorphins make you happy!



(continued...)

To make lifelong habits and improvements in your body & health



The dedication you give to exercising carries over into other aspects of your life



(continued...)

Exercise reduces the risk of heart disease



Prove others wrong...
you know, the naysayers, the ones who tell you that you *can't do* something...



(continued...)

**118. you don't
NEED a gym to
exercise.**



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no equipment required so there's no excuse

- 1) Walk, Jog or Run (depending on your fitness/health level)
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- 4) Push ups
- 5) Crunches
- 6) Burpees
- 7) Zumba (or any type of dance)

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50 CRUNCHES

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