

idea corner

Exercise: Appropriate and Professional

Many Extension agents find the type of exercise necessary to achieve physical fitness incompatible with their lifestyle. Their work requires much sitting interspersed with the stress of public and media appearances.

These things make people tired; not physically tired, just psychologically drained. Add the occupational hazard of too many appetizing meals as part of the job and you have the picture of an overstressed, underexercised, overfed group of professionals.

One solution: planning for exercise. When the agent finds physical condition is a limiting factor to doing the job, then that person should, as a professional, go about remedying the situation.

Ask yourself the following questions:

How much do you weigh today compared to when you were 21? If you weigh 20 pounds more, you're very likely overweight.

Can you walk or run a mile in 12 minutes? If you can't, you're probably in poor physical condition and need a set routine of running, bicycling, swimming, walking, or rope skipping to remedy your situation, as suggested in Kenneth Cooper's book, *The New Aerobics*.

A process of aerating and exercising the heart and lungs has been scientifically developed in recent years for all of these activities. Progressive levels of

exercise are available for all ages, both sexes, and all starting physical conditions. Even people with a history of heart problems can successfully "get in condition," if they want to, by following a regimen of prescribed exercise supervised by their physician.

Do you occasionally get an "extra" heartbeat? Palpitations are one sign of stress. So is lying awake nights worrying about tomorrow's program. Another is the inability to get organized. Exercise is a natural tranquilizer. Frustrations are vented. The telephone and the "drop-in" clients are left behind.

Does your clientele disapprove? If they do, they need education in fitness. Perhaps, they'll understand that your work is different from theirs and you need an exercise break in your routine to serve them better. In some places, it may be better to tell a few people as possible that you're exercising, because you're likely to get invitations to join them to use a broom, shovel, or chainsaw.

Once the decision has been made to exercise regularly, some preparation is necessary. The beginning is a physical examination. Tell your physician of your intent to condition yourself and ask his/her advice. Set a goal regarding your weight. As in other Extension work, needs determine goals. Now you need a plan.

Select an exercise routine. Take your limitations into consideration. Swimming may not be applicable to those who are afraid of water or don't

have a convenient pool. Bicycling may be prohibitively dangerous because of traffic conditions in your area. Perhaps there are steep hills. An exercise routine must be appealing, appropriate, and available to be successful.

Running and rope skipping may be solutions for you. Running can be done almost anywhere and anytime. Much information is available about training schedules and the rate at which you should exercise. Many people develop a routine, running over a known distance in a prescribed time. Some take running like a dose of medicine and others enjoy their run for freedom and away from frustration.

Rope skipping can be an exercise routine by itself or done with other forms of exercise. It's possible to keep a rope in the desk drawer. The determined agent can get 15 minutes of jumping exercise at lunch time if a lavatory is available for post exercise wash up.

Some Extension specialists use rope skipping when they're on the road and can only exercise in a motel room. Runners often skip rope when the weather is rainy or too cold to go outdoors. Others skip rope while watching television news in the morning and evening. Connecticut has a 4-H project on rope skipping that also gives training schedules approved for adults by a Dr. Robert Dowling of the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York.

Extension agents who decide that their own fitness is a limiting factor to carrying out an Extension program will make a professional decision to do something about it. They owe it to themselves and their clientele to set goals of weight, time, and distance. Assigning priority to fitness can assure Extension professionals that their

schedule will allow these goals, also, to be accomplished.

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