



Focus on Fitness

by Laurie Burns
Exercise Physiologist

Weighty decisions

1. Do you make a New Year's resolution each year to lose weight?
2. Do you try every new diet that is published?
3. Do you spend more and more money each year trying to lose weight?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then you need to follow these guidelines.

To make a lifestyle change which is what losing fat is all about takes time and commitment. If you are promised, quick results, meal substitutes or any other gimmick then you need to take a second look at the program you have chosen to lose fat.

How to Choose a Safe and Effective Lifestyle Plan

Choose one that features positive clues, not negative.

POSITIVE CLUES

- YES NO Promotes gradual weight loss 1-2 lbs. per week.
 - YES NO Provides adequate calories (at least 1200-1500 for women and 1500-1800 for men).
 - YES NO Follows dietary guidelines set out in the Canada Food Guide.
 - YES NO Registered professional dietitians or other medical professionals provide supervision.
 - YES NO Provides individualized program, considering goals and needs.
 - YES NO Includes nutrition education and behaviour modification. The focus is on lifestyle change.
 - YES NO Includes maintenance plan.
 - YES NO Encourages you to keep daily records of food intake and exercise.
 - YES NO Does not require vitamins or supplements.
 - YES NO Strongly encourages exercise.
- #### NEGATIVE CLUES
- YES NO Promises quick results (3 or more lbs. lost per week).
 - YES NO Promises effortless weight loss.
 - YES NO Requires the use of pre-packaged food, vitamin and other supplements.
 - YES NO Employs high pressure sales tactics.
 - YES NO Offers one time only specials.
 - YES NO Has salespeople double as nutrition counsellors or former "dieters" of the program.
 - YES NO Uses drugs that purportedly burn fat by increasing metabolism.
 - YES NO Discourages exercise.



Planning practices

To learn, athletes need to practice many times, and successfully. The key to providing enough practice time is planning - planning to maximize activity and minimize listening and waiting.

Before you plan how to practice, you must plan what to practice. Choose activities that are appropriate yet challenging for your athletes, and that are realistic for your sport, leading to simulation of the eventual competitive situation.

When planning how to practice, maximize doing by designing groupings of athletes that are as small as practical and as active as possible. Consider these questions:

- *should athletes work alone, in pairs, or in small groups?
- *should they be matched by size? skill level? aggressiveness?
- *what sort of space do they need?
- *how should they be arranged so they can move without danger?
- *how will equipment be distributed efficiently?
- *how many times should the activity be repeated for some improvement to occur?

Here are three other tips to maximize activity:

- *give short, simple, clear instructions
- *plan how to move the athletes into activity after instructions or a demonstration. Whenever possible, make seeing/listening formations similar to those used in activity
- *keep athletes' attention in the time between demonstration/instructions and the start of activity

Finally, check to find out just how active your athletes actually are. Count how many times your best athlete, your poorest athlete, an average athlete, each practices a skill or drill. Are they successful enough times to be encouraged?

Jack Donohue was coach of Canada's National Basketball Team from 1972-1988, and is a nationally recognized coaching expert. For more information on coaching skills and the National Coaching Certification Program, contact the Coaching Association of Canada, 1600 James Naismith Drive, Gloucester, Ontario, K1B 5N4, or 3M Canada Inc., P.O. Box 5757, London, Ontario, N6A 4T1.



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