



## Timely Information for Personal Success

# Take Small Steps to Attain a Big Reward

By *Tim Lencki*

As an author, speaker, and personal trainer in the fitness industry, I've listened to numerous people explain their fitness goals prior to embarking on their "plan for success." Many times, this quest involves too short a period to achieve during this time frame — or it's a goal that is too far-fetched. Due to New Year's resolutions, this approach becomes very common around this time of year. My recommendation is to break down large goals into manageable steps.

Instead of saying that you will start exercising daily, quit a bad habit, and start a new diet and lose a bunch of weight — do ONE thing first:

❖ **Start an exercise program and commit to working out at least a few days a week.** Once you've established consistency (i.e. that you are more certain you'll stick with it) you can add another day to your workout program — or exercise for a longer duration on certain days. *Gradually* increase the frequency and duration of your workouts.

❖ **Move on to your next goal — nutrition.** However, rather than going "all-out" on some crazy diet plan, simply make small adjustments in your nutritional habits, such as replacing that can of soda with a glass of water — or reduce the size of your dessert by half. You'd be surprised how small changes add up. For instance, reducing caloric intake by 100 calories a day could, over the course of a year, lead to a loss of more than 10 pounds. That's not bad for doing something as simple as cutting out a few cans of soda a week. In addition, as you experience success in the little things, you will inch closer toward a bigger goal you may have — such as losing 30 pounds or going down a few dress sizes.

❖ **Use a small-step approach to get through a longer workout.** Paula Radcliffe, a three-time marathon winner, says that rather than setting her Stairmaster for 45 minutes, she'll set it for just 10 minutes. Then, when the 10 minutes is up, she resets it for nine minutes, then eight, then seven, until she's exercised for 45 minutes. Paula says, "The

**Small Steps**

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## 'Diet' Foods to Avoid

Many of us will enjoy yourselves a little too much over the holiday season. If you end up needing to shed a few unwanted holiday pounds, follow some sound nutrition principles and be cautious of "diet" food manufacturer claims:



**1. Drinks with calories —** Watch out for drinks that are loaded with sugars despite being labeled "diet" — such as vitamin drinks. Choose drinks with zero calories. Better yet, drink water.

**2. Trail mix —** If the mix contains yogurt-coated ingredients, it likely also contains trans fat, which has a negative effect on cholesterol. Consider making your own trail mix containing peanuts, walnuts, almonds, raisins, and bits of dark chocolate — but not too much!

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## Healthy Recipe: Southwestern Covered Bean Dip

### INGREDIENTS:

- One 16-ounce can nonfat refried beans
- One 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed
- Four scallions, sliced
- 1/2 cup (each) salsa, low-fat sour cream
- 1/2 teaspoon (each) cumin, chili powder
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack or cheddar cheese
- 1-1/2 cup chopped romaine lettuce
- 1 medium (each) tomato, avocado, chopped
- 1/4 cup (each) pickled jalapeno slices, chopped; canned black olives (optional)

### Tips & Notes

- **Make ahead tip:** Prepare through Step 1 (see directions at right), cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day. To serve, continue with Steps 2 and 3. **Serving size:** 12 servings, about 1/2 cup each.

### DIRECTIONS:

- 1 Combine refried beans, black beans, scallions, salsa, cumin, chili powder and jalapenos in a medium bowl. Transfer to a shallow 2-quart microwave-safe dish; sprinkle with cheese.
- 2 Microwave on high until cheese is melted and beans are hot — 3 to 5 minutes.
- 3 Spread sour cream evenly over hot bean mixture, then scatter with lettuce, tomato, avocado, and olives (if you're using them).

### NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Calories per serving: 146
- Carbohydrates: 15 g.
- Protein: 7 g.
- Sodium: 288 mg.
- Fat: 7 g. (3 g. saturated)
- Fiber: 5 g.

Remember, for confidential assistance call:



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## Questions and Answers The Truth About Cardio & Colds

**Q:** Is it true that cardiovascular exercise is the cure-all for fat loss?

**A:** This is false! Cardio or aerobic exercise will help you burn calories, however, the caloric expenditure during this type of activity is only temporary. Utilize strength training also, because the more muscle you have, the more calories you will burn. The best workout program combines cardio and strength training — along with stretching.

**Q:** Is it true that exercise can reduce your risk of catching a cold?

**A:** Yes! Studies have found a link between moderate, regular exercise and a strong immune system. People who perform a moderate-intensity walk for 40 minutes per day had half as many sick days due to colds or sore throats than those who don't exercise. During moderate-intensity exercise, immune cells circulate through the body at more rapid pace, and are better able to kill viruses and bacteria. However, there is also evidence to suggest that *too much* intense exercise can reduce immunity. That's because the hormones cortisol and adrenaline raise blood pressure and cholesterol levels and suppress the immune system. The morale of the story is this: Exercise, but don't overdo it! ❖

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*amount of time I spend exercising is the same, but I'm a lot more motivated when I get to pat myself on the back and reward myself by making each interval a minute shorter."*

### Summary

I think Paula offers great advice that should be applied to *all* aspects of a fitness program. Avoid making health-and-fitness goals too big. Focus instead on taking *action*. Progress will be made when you concentrate on attaining small, achievable goals on a regular basis. If you learn from this advice, you'll experience the joy of achieving goals — and living a healthier life. ❖

*Tim Lencki, MS, CSCS, is a strength and conditioning specialist and author of Fitness One Day at a Time, and a new bookette® series for active lifestyles. Visit Tim's website at [www.thefitnesseducator.com](http://www.thefitnesseducator.com). Additional source: *The Power of Small: Why Little Things Make All the Difference*, by Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Koval.*



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**3. Frozen diet entrees** — These can be very high in salt and low in nutrients. Refined grains are often used rather than whole grains. You're better off making nutritious meals on the weekend or your days off and freeze them for later in the week.

**4. Fat-free sweets** — Cookies and cakes can be deceiving! "Fat-free" does not mean calorie free! People will often load up when they see a word like that, thinking it's ok, when in reality they're piling on the calories.

### Summary

The best way to get rid of excess holiday pounds is to be mindful of nutrition habits by eating reasonably sized portions, and sticking to foods you know are healthy. And don't forget to be physically active. Losing weight is a two-part equation — good nutrition plus exercise. ❖

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