



Lesson Twelve: Physical Fitness – Fit for Life

Background

Recently, leading medical experts issued a special report stating that the number of deaths in the United States due to lack of physical activity would soon surpass those attributed to tobacco use. Over the past decade, much has been learned about physical fitness and health. These new findings include:

1. **Fitness Increases Life Expectancy:** People who are generally inactive now can still improve their health status by becoming active on a regular basis.
2. **Even Moderate Exercise Leads to Better Health:** The level of physical activity does not need to be strenuous in order to make significant health benefits (e.g., regular walking, gardening or swimming can significantly lower the risk of a heart attack or stroke).
3. **Fitness Can Be Increased Gradually:** You can achieve greater health benefits by increasing your amount (or duration, frequency, intensity) of exercise. In other words, the greater a person's level of fitness, the greater he/she can reduce potential health risks.
4. **Small Amounts Add Up:** A person who exercises several times a day (e.g., walks 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes at lunch, and 10 minutes after school) achieves a health benefit equal to walking for a full 30-minute period. This new finding is important since many people say it is hard to find 30 minutes or more exercise.

Discussion Questions

1. Regular physical exercise has been described by many doctors as the “silver bullet” or the everyday “cure” for many of the diseases that lead to early death. Why is that? What are the long-term benefits of physical activity?
2. What were some of the reasons the teens in the video said they were “too busy” to exercise? If exercise can help reduce your risk of cancer, heart attacks and stress, why don't more teens exercise regularly?
3. Daily physical education requirements for students vary based upon grade level and state. Do you think students should be required to take physical education each year? Why or why not?



4. Across the United States, more physical education programs are moving toward health-related fitness and the “new” physical education. What would make the physical education program at our school more attractive to you? What suggestions do you have to increase the number of students who participate in and value physical education?
5. What about outside of school? How many of you participate in physical activities outside of school? What are some of the things you do? What physical activities would you like our community to offer?
6. At the end of the video, the Kids on the Couch shared their feelings and thoughts. What did you think about their discussion? Do you agree or disagree with what they said? Why?

Vocabulary Builders

Term	Definition
Health-related fitness	A term used to describe fitness measures that can predict longevity and quality of life. These assessments include aerobic capacity, lower back flexibility, body composition, and abdominal fitness.
“New” physical education	A term used to describe the change from a traditional sports-centered physical education program to one that also highlights nutrition and obesity prevention. This type of program is more individualized and has a wellness and personal fitness emphasis.
P.A.N.T.	It stands for: Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Tobacco. Medical experts and health educators recommend that individuals participate in daily physical activity, practice good nutritional habits, and avoid smoking or using other tobacco products.

Activity

Chart Your Course... One Step at a Time

Project and Purpose

Students will chart their exercise habits for one week in order to analyze their current behaviors and set goals for their future.

Materials

- Exercise Journal
- Paper and pens



Procedure

1. Ask: *What did you do to exercise yesterday after school? How long did you exercise, if at all? Have you exercised today? Describe what you did*
2. Explain that sometimes people are not even aware of what they do to exercise each day. Experts have found that children need to exercise at least 60 minutes each day.
3. Next distribute the *Exercise Journal* and explain that they will record their time and activity of all exercising. Remind them that certain chores are considered exercise and review what those activities might be. They will record their active exercise times for one week, as well as their eating habits.
4. Be sure to give them a due date for the completion of their charts. On the due date, ask students to answer the following questions:
 - *Did you exercise the recommended 60 minutes per day every day?*
 - *What sorts of activities did you participate in?*
 - *If you did not meet the recommended time, why not? If you did, what factors in your life contributed to being able to do so?*
5. Have each student write a personal goal for changing or maintaining their exercise habits.



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