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MU MENTION PG. 3

Phys Ed: How Much Exercise to Avoid Feeling Gloomy?

DECEMBER 30, 2009 By GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

Recently researchers trawled through a vast database of survey information about the health and habits of men and women in Scotland, hoping to determine how much exercise is needed to keep the Scots from feeling gloomy (or in technical terms, experiencing “psychological distress”). The answer, according to a study published in this month’s *British Journal of Sports Medicine*: a mere 20 minutes a week of any physical activity, whether sports, walking, gardening or even housecleaning, the last not usually associated with bringing out the sunshine. The researchers found that more activity conferred more mental-health benefits and that “participation in vigorous sports activities” tended to be the “most beneficial for mental health.” But their overall conclusion was that being active for as little as 20 minutes a week is sufficient, if your specific goal is mental health.

The question of how much exercise is enough gains special piquancy at this time of year, when many of us dust off last year’s New Year’s resolutions and promise to be more diligent about working out in the coming year. Unfortunately, figuring out an ideal exercise dosage is not simple, in part because the amount of exercise needed depends on the benefits you hope to gain. Twenty minutes a week of vacuuming or other activity may, according to the Scottish study, increase your contentment, but it certainly won’t do much for your cardiovascular fitness and is unlikely to lessen your risks for a multitude of diseases and, ultimately, of premature death, benefits that a greater amount of exercise may provide. It also won’t help much with weight loss. That said, anyone resolving to increase the amount of housecleaning they do in the New Year is welcome to begin their regimen at my home.

In general, a wide reading of the latest sports science makes it clear that the “amount of physical activity necessary to produce health benefits cannot yet be identified with a high degree of precision,” according to the authors of the 2008 *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* report, which was produced by the Department of Health and Human Services and was based on the recommendations of an advisory committee scientists. These experts waded through dozens of studies on the health effects of exercise, looking at the impacts that exercise can have on people’s risks for heart disease, obesity, diabetes, cancer, depression and, in general, premature death. In some studies that were cited, exercise actually seemed to confer little if any disease-

fighting benefits. In others, the benefits kicked in only if the exercise was quite strenuous; in yet others, a gentle stroll a few times a week was enough to lessen the risk of early death.

Despite the inconsistent results, caused in some part by even more inconsistent methodologies between the different studies, the advisory committee did ultimately reach some conclusions about how much — or, really, how little — exercise we each should be doing. That minimum amount of exercise required to see a significant lowering of your risk of dying prematurely was, they concluded, 500 MET minutes of exercise a week. Of course, unless you're an exercise scientist, there's a good chance you don't know what a MET minute is. A single MET, or Metabolic Equivalent of Task, is the amount of energy a person uses at rest. Two METs represent twice the energy burned at rest; four METs, four times the energy used at rest; and so on. Walking at three miles per hour is a 3.3-MET activity, while running at 6 miles an hour is a 10-MET activity. The committee concluded that a person needs to accumulate a weekly minimum of 500 MET minutes of exercise, which does not mean 500 minutes of exercise. Instead, 150 minutes a week (two and a half hours) of a moderate, three- to five-MET activity, such as walking, works out to be about 500 MET minutes. Half as much time (an hour and 15 minutes per week) spent on a 6-plus MET activity like easy jogging seems, according to the committee, to have similar health effects.

Interestingly, they did not find that exercise beyond a certain point conferred significant additional health benefits. Instead, the “dose response” for exercise, the committee found, is “curvilinear.” In other words, people who are the least active to start with get the most health benefit from starting to exercise. People who already are fit don't necessarily get a big additional health benefit from adding more workout time to their regimens. Which is not to say that if you are, for instance, a devoted runner or cyclist, you should reduce your workout time in 2010 to 500 MET minutes per week. You're already well ahead in terms of health benefits. According to the Physical Activity Guidelines report, “It has been estimated that people who are physically active for approximately seven hours a week have a 40 percent lower risk of dying early than those who are active for less than 30 minutes a week.”

Whether there might be an upper limit to the advisable amount of exercise is an issue that was not addressed by the group. It hasn't been directly studied much by science, either, in part because of logistical and ethical barriers; you can't run people until they drop. But there have been intimations that you can be too avid. As I reported in this column in October, laboratory mice that were made to run to exhaustion were more likely than mice that ran moderately to succumb to the flu. Similarly, a few small but provocative studies of the coronary health of long-time, competitive marathon runners have suggested that their efforts may not, in every case, be doing their hearts good, as I also reported this year.

So what does all this mean as you plan your 2010 exercise routines? First, because “activity affects so many organs and pre-disease states,” according to **Frank Booth, a professor in the department of biomedical sciences at the University of Missouri** at Columbus, who has extensively studied the health effects of exercise, “any activity is better than no activity.” For those contemplating their first regular exercise routine, consult a doctor before starting, of course. Then, get out and walk, working your way up to least 150 minutes a week. Although not all of the studies under review found health benefits from such relatively light aerobic exercise, enough of them did to support the recommendation of regular brisk walks or other moderate activities. (Moderate exercise, by the way, is defined by the Department of Health and Human Services as activities of between three and six METs, equivalent to about 45 to 64 percent of your maximum heart rate — or in simpler terms, activities during which it is possible for you to talk to a companion but too hard for you to sing the words to your favorite song.)

You do not necessarily have to divide your exercise time into daily allotments, either. Existing “scientific evidence does not allow researchers to say, for example, whether the health benefits of 30 minutes on five days a week are any different from the health benefits of 50 minutes on three days a week,” according to the activity guidelines. Do what suits your schedule. But, **Mr. Booth says**, do something. “Inactivity is looking more and more like one of the underlying causes of many chronic diseases,” he says. If, he adds, “you want to live to be 100,” which happens to be my New Year’s resolution, “then don’t just sit all day.”

Poynteronline

MU MENTION PG. 2

Dec. 31, 2009

Learn New Skills: A New Year's Resolution You Can Keep

Posted by Joe Grimm at 12:05 AM on Dec. 31, 2009

I have made a lot of New Year's resolutions in the past, but I still don't exercise enough, the basement is still a pit and I don't take enough time to enjoy the people closest to me. So, let's carry those resolutions forward. I pledge to do them all in 2010. And this time I really mean it!

But there is one resolution I always keep: to learn and apply something new. These days it is critical for all of us to grow professionally. It can make all the difference.

There is a story to how I started doing this. I tell it often. Let me try to reconstruct the scene for you.

I was at the job fair at a convention for the National Association of Black Journalists and a photographer whom I would guess to be about 35 asked me to look at his portfolio. He said he wasn't looking for a new job, but wanted a critique. As we looked through his photographs, I remarked on each one and what I liked about them.

He would say, "Thank you. I shot that six months ago," or, "I appreciate that. I did that one two months ago."

It soon became clear that everything in this portfolio was new.

I stopped. "Wait a minute. You say you do not want a new job, yet we are at a job fair and you have made a new portfolio. What is going on here?"

He told me, "I use my portfolio to make myself better. Every year, I want to better my older work."

That is very smart. I thought about my own career. I am not a photographer, but I have a resume. Was I doing something that was resume-worthy every year, or was I coasting? I decided to do one new thing every year. I later upped that to several things, given the times we're in.

This has led me to publish books, blog, make podcasts, create new Web sites and learn new software. I don't count a skill as mastered until I use it to make something. So, the goal isn't to learn how to make an audio slide show. The goal is to make one.

I hope you adopt a similar goal for 2010. To help you, I am listing 10 places where you can learn something new in 2010.

The first is Poynter's News University. The second one is the Freedom Forum's Diversity Institute, where I will take an advanced video training course Jan. 6-10.

That will get me started on taking care of one resolution for 2010. I wonder if I'll work

out while I'm there and start on a second resolution?

10 Ways to Train in '10

- News University: offers online training, including some free courses.
- The Freedom Forum's Diversity Institute has multimedia and video workshops and resources.
- The Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism offers free training online and regionally.
- The Knight Digital Media Center offers seminars, tutorials, blogs.
- Investigative Reporters & Editors is pretty much a grassroots operation that grew up. National, local conferences and training at the **University of Missouri**.
- The Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education has leadership and diversity training.
- AAJA's Executive Leadership Program has trained many journalists and will celebrate its 15th anniversary in 2010.
- The American Press Institute focuses on leadership training.
- The National Press Foundation, based in Washington, D.C., focuses on content rather than skills.
- JournalismTraining.org, which is hosted by SPJ, tries to keep us informed about a wide range of training opportunities.

Posted on Wed, Dec. 30, 2009

Texas Bowl means everything to Missouri

By MIKE DeARMOND

HOUSTON | To understand how big a victory in the Texas Bowl would be to Missouri, you have to go back to the post-Border War locker room at Arrowhead Stadium.

There, gathering his players around him, Missouri coach Gary Pinkel let it all hang out. Normally controlled, normally understated, Pinkel threw back his head and in primal tones yelled:

"How 'bout them Tigers!"

The scene can now be shared thanks to a video that's on Missouri's Web site. But even before that revelation, there was the strident echo of Pinkel's words coming through the dressing room door.

"You talk about finishing a football game!" Pinkel preached. "Defense goes out and gets a safety and just battled, and battled and battled. Play after play after play." Pinkel, at that point, seemed overcome.

"I'm kind of numb, man," he said.

But then he found his voice again.

"Remember when we drove in here and saw all the buses (full of fans)? All of a sudden you saw, 'Gol' dang! This is a big deal, wasn't it?"

For Missouri it certainly was.

The victory over Kansas — 41-39 on Grant Ressel's last-second field goal — was more than the difference between heading to a bowl game at 8-4 rather than 7-5. It was the difference between disappointment that the Missouri program could lose the momentum of two straight Big 12 North title seasons and the validation that, in a rebuilding season with 34 of the top 44 players being sophomores, redshirt freshmen or true freshmen, the program could keep on keeping on.

"If we hadn't done that it would have ended on a bitter note," quarterback Blaine Gabbert said. "It was huge."

Larger, perhaps, than a victory today in the Texas Bowl over 9-4 Navy. A victory might vault the Tigers into the final Top 25 rankings.

The Midshipmen are playing in their seventh straight bowl game. But they are undersized on the line and depend as much on discipline and the opponents' inability to stop what is these days an unusual triple-option offense as on sheer athletic talent.

"We kind of know who we are," Navy coach Ken Niumatalolo said. "We know we're never going to win the 'get off the bus' contest."

If Missouri's players swallow that "we're the underdog" line, the Tigers could be in trouble. Navy not only runs the ball as effectively as any team in the nation, it also makes big plays in the passing game when the defense over-commits to slowing the run.

And just as there was a big difference between 7-5 and 8-4, there would be a sizeable difference between finishing 8-5 and 9-4 for Missouri.

A Texas Bowl triumph would keep Missouri among the most victorious teams over the last three seasons. The Tigers, with 30 wins going into today, are one of 14 teams that have won 30 or more games since 2007. That puts them ahead of every Big 12 team except Texas.

For Missouri, the Texas Bowl is all about program momentum. About the stars of today passing a baton to the stars of tomorrow.

It was a subject Pinkel, at the top of his lungs, addressed back on the day Missouri beat Kansas.

"Every head coach wants a team that will play when things get tough, and battle," Pinkel said. "What a lesson for all our young players."

Today, then, is really about validating the Border War victory over Kansas.

"This," said MU running back Derrick Washington, "was all set up by beating KU."

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MU student shares her true story on MTV show

No doubt there will be drama. That's what has kept viewers tuning in to MTV's "The Real World" for 22 seasons. But in between the reality TV moments, University of Missouri junior Emily Schromm hopes viewers also see that young adults are civic-minded and well-rounded.

Schromm is among eight young adults who make up the cast of this season's "The Real World," which premieres at 9 p.m. today on the cable network. The long-running reality show challenges groups of strangers to live together as cameras roll. This season, cast members shared a home on Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C. The house featured co-ed bedrooms, showers with see-through doors, a hot tub, a spare room known as the "love sac" and other amenities aimed to foster tension, sexual or otherwise.

Expect "lots of drama," Schromm said. But she also hopes the show focuses on the time cast members spent volunteering and working. She interned for Africa Action, an organization dedicated to African issues. "I hope that is shown just as much as the craziness," she said. "Yeah, we're young and make mistakes, but at the same time, our hearts want to do good and want to make a difference in this world."

Even before the show debuts, Schromm has found herself a little famous. She has more than 160 Facebook fans, attracted some "stalkers" and jokes that long-lost friends are coming out of the woodwork.

But Schromm — who said she doesn't even like reality television — wasn't looking for 15 minutes of fame when she agreed to audition for the show. She was working at Starbucks on campus when "The Real World" casting calls were held at MU in March. A casting director came into the shop, the two hit it off, and he convinced her to try out.

"The next thing I knew, I kept advancing," she said. "I'm a very go-with-the-flow kind of person and believe everything happens for a reason. The casting director — God knows why — kept coming in and wanting me to audition. So I thought, 'Why not?'"

Schromm's background no doubt intrigued directors. Raised in a fundamentalist Christian church in Kirksville, she's been described in show promotions as having broken free from a "cult." Schromm also revealed in a video biography that she's open to dating both women and men. Those attributes helped foster some in-depth conversations on the show.

"The season touches on big issues," Schromm said. "We touched on religion. We touched on sexuality. We touched on really core values. Basically, we cut through the bullshit and really got into what matters."

That's not to say there won't be superficial drama. Online teasers promise viewers will watch a "dysfunctional relationship" unfold between Schromm and roommate Ty Ruff of Baltimore. Schromm couldn't divulge details, but "there will be some shocking things," she said.

Schromm will watch the premiere at a party tonight in Washington, D.C., while her friends at MU host their own watch party.

"We figure we'll all get together and make fun of her at the same time," her Columbia roommate, Jessica Lopez, joked.

Lopez said she's excited for Schromm and looking forward to seeing her on television. "It's kind of unreal," she said.

Lopez said she expects Schromm's adventuresome side to be on display during the show but also suspects her friend's less dramatic attributes will be downplayed. "She has a softer side," Lopez said. "She definitely has a side of her that cares about people, close friends and family."

Unlike many reality-show participants, Schromm isn't interested in a TV career. Instead, the experience piqued her interest in international affairs. She's switching her major from biology to international relations, and next semester, she plans to transfer to an out-of-state college. "I'm restless in Missouri," she said.

Back in Columbia for at least a semester, though, Schromm hopes to keep a low profile.

"I think I'll wear a hat," she said. "I hope people don't ask questions. And I hope they don't judge me too harshly."