

# proactive

IN CO-OPERATION WITH



1 step

2 skip

3 run

## step into action for better health

EDMONTON JOURNAL



# LITTLE BIG RUN

## Higher- performance living

**W**hen we talk about higher-performance living we're not talking about climbing Mount Everest or doing the Sahara Desert Marathon, but looking for opportunities to challenge our mindset, physical fitness, and lifestyle. How about exploring opportunities that activate and realize the potential that lies within you?

So what is your potential? What do you feel is holding you back from reaching your potential? How would your life change when you actualize more of your potential? Would you move a step closer to your potential if you had more energy, more vitality, more work capacity, more strength, and more spirit?

Today, as you go through your day, ask yourself what are the simple things in your life that you could do a little better. Every time you replace a negative thought with a positive one, every time you take the stairs instead of the escalator, every time you replace those french fries with vegetables and dessert with fruit, you move one step closer to your potential. Although these decisions and actions may seem to be small by themselves, they quickly have a synergistic effect that often leads to a significant improvement.

These small examples not only demonstrate our human capacity for higher performance when we push ourselves, but they represent where each of us can function on a day-to-day basis and the incredible potential that lies within us.

Each of us has experienced the incredible feelings when we achieved what we committed ourselves to do. We are talking about moving from where you are now closer to your inherent potential – it is exciting and invigorating!

[www.littlebigrun.ca](http://www.littlebigrun.ca)

LBR FOUNDERS: U OF A, CAPITAL HEALTH, CITY OF EDMONTON

## Chronic pain can drive you to distraction

ISABELA C. VARELA

**A**fter enduring a spinal injury while filming the movie *Syriana* in 2005, the normally jovial George Clooney told National Public Radio he considered killing himself because the chronic pain was so unbearable. The actor also said he continued to suffer from short-term memory problems even after undergoing surgery for the injury.

Clooney might be interested to know that researchers at the University of Alberta have confirmed that chronic pain doesn't just cause physical discomfort; it can impair memory and concentration.

In a study conducted by researchers Bruce D. Dick and Saifudin Rashiq at the U of A's Multidisciplinary Pain Centre, two-thirds of participants with chronic pain showed significant disruption of attention and memory when tested.

But that's not the biggest news.

The doctors seem to have zeroed in on one of the cognitive mechanisms affected by chronic pain. Their

findings suggest that pain may disrupt a person's ability to retain information for processing and retain it for long-term memory. For example, chronic pain sufferers might have difficulty remembering a phone number, or details of short conversations. In other words, chronic pain can literally drive people to distraction.

The participants in the study – all of whom had pain lasting six months or longer – were tested on working memory and attention on separate 'pain' and 'less pain' days.

On the 'less pain' days, participants were tested after receiving a pain-reducing procedure as part of their ongoing treatment at the centre. On 'pain' days, participants were tested without having received a pain-reducing procedure, when their pain level was high. A startling 67 per cent

showed clinical impairment due to pain.

"Prevalence studies indicate that as much as 44 per cent of the population – in Canada as well as in the U.S. and Europe – experience pain on a regular basis, and that in approximately one-quarter of this group the pain is severe," says Dick. The cost of chronic pain to society is great, and these researchers argue the matter needs to be recognized as a public health priority.

Dick hopes the results of this study will provide some validation to people who suffer from chronic pain and memory loss and might think, 'Is it just me?' He also believes that, with further research, pain therapists can develop new strategies to help patients overcome memory lapses.

Hopefully studies like this will help people recognize that when someone they know is suffering from chronic pain and has a hard time concentrating or remembering things, that the distraction is real. Getting treatment for their pain may help relieve some memory and concentration problems in these folks as well.



## Get back to the basics with your exercise program

CYNTHIA DUSSEAULI  
FOR CAPITAL HEALTH

**W**hen did exercising become so complicated? With new videos, equipment and fads popping up all the time, it's hard to know what's the best way to get active.

But it really doesn't need to be difficult, says John Stanton, founder of the Running Room and community ambassador for Capital Health's Weight Wise program. You just need to take a "back to the basics" approach.

"Everybody should have three goals," says Stanton. "Your first goal should be to get your butt out the door on a regular basis."

While it might be the hardest part of any exercise program, making a

commitment and honouring it is so important. You'll feel so much better after taking that first step.

Stanton recommends setting a seasonal goal for yourself as the second step in getting active again. Take part in a fundraising run like the Terry Fox Run or Run for the Cure. If running isn't your speed, consider participating in the Super Cities Walk for MS or the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Mother Daughter Walk or the Little Big Run.

If you're looking for a solitary form of exercise, set a date with yourself to take a hike, or cycle through the river valley. Include your family; take a hiking trip to the mountains. Whatever you decide, exercise doesn't have to be

complicated – it's about getting out and having fun.

And once you're out the door and have found an activity you love, set an ultimate goal for yourself.

"It could be something like running a half marathon before you reach a certain age," says Stanton. Whether it's hiking up a mountain, cycling across the province or trekking across the Inca Trail, put it in your long-range calendar and never stop planning for it. "We need to view exercise as children do," says Stanton. "Children look at exercise as playing, and adults need to think of exercise as a playful activity."

**Run or walk: take your pick**

There's no perfect exercise for

everybody, says John Stanton.

"But I think that between walking and running, there's an exercise there that will fit most people," he says. "Keep in mind there's an inherent risk of injury with running. So people need to weigh this and decide what's going to work for them."

If you have health concerns, Stanton recommends checking with your physician before embarking on a walking or running program. Once you get the OK, go for it.

Make sure to stretch after your workout, add some weight training at least two times a week and you'll have all of the components necessary for a complete exercise program.

[www.capitalhealth.ca](http://www.capitalhealth.ca)



**proactive** will appear every Monday on the back page of the *Journal's* "Body & Health" section. For comments or story ideas, feel free to e-mail [proactive@thejournal.canwest.com](mailto:proactive@thejournal.canwest.com).

## Fuel your resolutions

To eat, or not to eat, that is the question

**R**esolving to become more physically fit is always a good idea, but to truly become fit, you must consider both the amount and type of exercise you get each day as well as your nutritional needs. What you choose to eat before and after a workout determines whether or not your fitness program will be successful.

"Too often people focus on the workout and pay very little attention to their nutrition," says Charlotte Varem-Sanders, a registered dietitian with Athletic Nutrition Services. "Exercise and diet go hand-in-hand. Eating the right things both prior to and after physical activity makes a real difference in your performance and in the success of your workout program."

Log on to [www.recipeforlife.ca](http://www.recipeforlife.ca) for some examples of what to eat before and after your workout.



3 run

**How you implement  
your healthy eating  
plan can affect your  
likelihood of success.**

For five tips on how to successfully move towards a permanent lifestyle improvement, log on to [www.recipeforlife.ca](http://www.recipeforlife.ca).

Resolve to get healthy this year? We want to help. Sign up for our newsletter and you'll receive a Monday tip on how to keep active throughout the year.

E-mail us at [newsletter@recipeforlife.ca](mailto:newsletter@recipeforlife.ca).



For healthy recipes

and nutritional information, visit:

[www.recipeforlife.ca](http://www.recipeforlife.ca)