



HOLD OFF ON HIBERNATING

Yes, it feels like everything is working against you. But now is when the greatest strides can be made.

By Todd Soura

It's 5 a.m. and you're awakened by your alarm. Half-awake, you reach out from under the cozy confines of your bed to silence the alarm, only to realize how cold the room is. In that instant, the first seed of doubt begins to take root in your mind. You open your eyes and are greeted by the sight of frosted-over window panes and a pitch-black sky. The roots spread a little deeper.

The routine that you've grown accustomed to suddenly feels as though it's too much to bear. What's one missed workout, right? The next morning, though, you remember how good it felt to sleep in, not the satisfaction that came from breaking a sweat.

Yes, more of an effort is needed to exercise in the winter. And, yes, the fruits of your labor are less obvious because you're constantly covered in multiple layers of clothing. But the winter is no time to go into hibernation. Take control of the elements and you will retain control of your life.

Visualize

You're going to need to find new ways to motivate yourself over the next couple of months. The easiest avenue is visualizing a healthier you. Look beyond the present

moment and see the ramifications of your actions a few months down the line.

This technique works both ways. When you opt to stay in bed over working out or when you reach for a bowl of ice cream as a late night snack, visualize the impact of those actions. And consider it in the most extreme way, like yourself 75 pounds heavier. In contrast, during that moment when you're straining to pull yourself out of your slumber, think of slipping into a new bathing suit — a smaller size than you wore last summer, no less — and heading to the beach this summer.

See yourself not as you are but as you will be. This will keep you moving forward.

Strategize

A standard winter routine should consist of resistance (weight) and cardio training two to five times per week, at 20 to 60 minutes per installment. Take advantage of the extra time you will be spending indoors by adding a 10-minute program to your usual routine. This is one option: Five sets of squats, pushups and crunches with a single set being 10 repetitions of each.

Winter is an excellent time to add mus-

cle to your physique. You can accomplish this by working out with slightly heavier weights at lower repetitions. The new muscle will give you a more toned appearance come the spring.

For those who want to focus even more on muscle size, workout with weights that are heavy enough to allow you to do only eight to 12 repetitions at a time. Also take slightly longer rests in between sets than you normally would.

If you enjoy exercising outdoors, getting around the small windows of daylight and, on occasion, the snow and ice will pose the greatest challenges. You don't need to abandon your outdoor routine, though. Just be smart about it. If it's possible, plan your workout during the middle of the day, when the temperature is at its peak.

The arrival of spring is symbolic of a fresh beginning. But winter is a building block to spring. Imagine the relief you will feel when the warmer weather rolls around and you know that you weathered the worst that Mother Nature can throw at you.

Todd Soura is the owner of Action Personal Training (www.actionpersonaltraining.com; 215-230-8923). •