

# GET REAL!

Be realistic about your goals, your diet and your exercise regimen. Compulsive exercising is as unhealthy as compulsive eating, says **NAWAZ MODI**

**W**HAT is the purpose of exercising and being fit? It is certainly not to fit yourself into some current fashion mould. The idea is not to try and look like someone else, but to make your own body as vibrant and healthy as it can be. Feel that you have positive control over your physical being. Overcome the alienation from our bodies that many of us tend to feel. Feel less frantic about being thin, and more concerned about being healthy and maintaining a reasonable weight.

It's therefore important to be realistic about what we can and can't achieve. If you have a large frame, it's unrealistic to aim at getting model thin — can Jayalalitha fantasise about having the figure of Sushmita Sen? Just concentrate on working towards being the best that you can be.

## The best combo

The fundamental rule, as I've said before, is to expand your calorific output through exercise and limit your calorific input through a sensible diet.

Just think — there are 3,500 calories in one pound of fat. If you combine burning 500 calories more with eating 500 calories less, you'll have a deficit of 1,000 calories at the end of the day and almost a kilo at the end of the week.

What is important is to be consistent and not to go to extremes — either in your diet or exercise. Compulsive exercise is as unhealthy as compulsive eating.

Keep the following guidelines in mind while exercising:

\* Exercise aerobically at least three times a week; preferably four or five, but no more than six days a week. The body needs

at least one day to rest and repair itself.

\* Exercise continuously for at least 30 minutes; 45 to 60 minutes would be ideal. Each session should burn 400 to 500 calories.

\* Make sure you start slowly and then gradually build up. If you go rushing into an over-demanding exercise schedule, you'll probably find that you've bitten off more than you can chew, which might just make you abandon the whole programme altogether.

\* Remember to warm up and cool down — always. Inadequate warm-ups and cool-downs are a major cause of injuries. The warm-up should include a combination of stretching and limbering exercises which will get the muscles and heart ready to work. The purpose of the cool-down is to bring your heart rate back to normal, and to help stretch and relax the muscles you have worked so hard. This is important, as leaving the muscles in a contracted state, instead of stretching them, could cause stiffness and soreness, 24 to 48 hours post-exercise. It could even cause muscle cramps.

\* Aerobic activities include dance aerobics, walking, jogging, swimming, and more. Start with any aerobic activity that you like.

\* Wear comfortable clothes. Cotton (especially during the hotter months of the year) is preferable to synthetics as it allows the body to breathe easily, thereby facilitating temperature regulation. Avoid synthetics like lycra, spandex and nylon as they don't allow the body to breathe easily.

\* Make sure you have a good pair of thick-soled sneakers to keep you light and sturdy on your feet. They will help enormously in injury prevention.

\* Keep in mind the principle of overload. Once your body adapts to a particular exercise and it starts getting easier, it is important to overload in order to continue seeing results. Otherwise, after a certain period of time, you'll notice that the routine is ineffective. But first, give yourself time to adapt to the activity before you decide to take on a more challenging level. One can overload by working harder, longer, more often or changing the type of activity to something

more challenging.

## It takes patience and understanding

What if your friend, who embarked on this programme with you, seems to be losing more fat and centimetres than you are? Be patient. Each body responds individually and differently. With calm persistence, you'll get what you want.

What if you're losing fat and inches, but just not in the areas you want to? Let me say this clearly: There is no such thing as spot reduction. It is a complete myth. You can't decide from which part of your body you want the fat burnt off. Your body

decides that. If you have the tendency to lose fat, let's say, off the chest first, and last on the hips, then you're just going to have to be patient and let the process run its course. It may take a little extra time and patience getting there, but it'll be well worth the wait.

Lastly, be positive. Don't focus on what's not happening; focus instead on what is, on the progress you're making. Feel good about the small changes you'll notice regularly. Notice that you start feeling better about yourself, that your self-confidence improves, you're mentally more alert, you start getting stronger, your clothes start getting looser... the benefits are endless.



Exercise in moderation for maximum benefits

PHOTOGRAPH: SUDHARAK OLWE