

## HEALTHY LIVING

Lean times can lead to...  
**Harder Bodies**

Frazzled?  
At least you  
can exercise

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Treasure Hutchinson, an executive recruiter for the beverage industry, can't predict whether the sputtering economy will slow down — or shut off — the demand for new hires. And in many ways, tumbling stocks, rising unemployment and deepening economic woes feel out of her control.

"It's scary," Hutchinson said. "You used to be able to go on vacation or make impulse buys. But now, you have to save your money because you don't know what tomorrow brings."

But while the economy takes stomach-turning dives under a cloud of uncertainty, Hutchinson has taken control of one area of her personal life — her fitness routine.

Three mornings a week, the one-time, self-proclaimed "couch potato," grinds through 44 push-ups, 32 sit-ups and a 2-mile run as part of an Operation Bootcamp class at a park near her home in Austell, Ga.

Hutchinson, 32, said her focus is unwavering. In September, she set a goal of losing 15 pounds; she's halfway there.

"Better than going out drinking or being addicted to food," she said. "If I am going to be addicted to something, let me be addicted to exercise."

J. Kip Matthews, an Athens, Ga., psychologist specializing in the psychology of exercise, said it's not uncommon for some people to bump up their cardio



Omega Bickham of Marietta, Ga., dances in the Zumba class at the same YMCA.



BOB ANDRES / COX NEWS SERVICE

Allison Redhead (right) works out in the Zumba Latino class at a metro Atlanta YMCA, where patrons seem more determined to shape up since the economy began to get into bad shape. Strenuous activity can be an antidote to economic stress.

routines during times of crisis. Running, playing hoops or even walking the dog can serve as an effective outlet for focusing on something positive and concrete, he said.

"There's concerns about job security and worrying about the economy and what is happening to my 401(k) and stocks," he said. "And exercise becomes an attractive activity people can turn to and control — they can determine the time that they exercise, the amount and the location."

And while memberships in gyms have dipped in Atlanta and across the country, usage among existing members is on the upswing.

Rebecca Shipley, branch executive director of the McCleskey-East Cobb YMCA, notes a rise in usage of 4 per-

cent in recent months, but she expects it could balloon if the economy continues to worsen.

"For those staying at the Y, they are coming to more classes and exercising harder and wanting to do more cardio and trying to combat the stress the best they can," Shipley said, adding that a fast-paced Zumba Latino dance class and yoga classes are particularly hot among members seeking stress relief.

Benson Manento, a former personal trainer who now runs the Hotlanta Bodies Fit Camp, has watched his bootcamp flock dwindle by about a third. But Manento, who is now offering a two-for-one special, has also noticed a curious trend — deeper commitment among those sticking with the program.

Among them is Lindsey Stewart, 25, of Atlanta.

"I've definitely upped it," Stewart said. "It helps me deal with stress. Better than smoking or drinking, this helps me escape from the things out of my control. I can control this."

As a voice actress for commercials and reading children's books, business is hard to predict. But on a recent morning, she reached her objective — 10 pull-ups and a 2-mile run.

An intense exercise routine helps keep Bruce Wise, an architect in the real estate business who was laid off last month, motivated.

"It gives you a sense of accomplishment," said Wise, of Atlanta, three times a week. "And it helps you stay in a positive mind-set." ■

### To Exercise Or Not When Facing A Financial Crisis

While some step it up a notch during times of crisis, others slow down or quit exercising. Athens, Ga., psychologist J. Kip Matthews says some who might feel depressed about the sinking economy may lose their motivation to work out or find it less enjoyable. At the same time, they might turn to other vices such as overeating or drinking.

Whether someone turns to exercise or the TV or booze is often shaped by the behaviors of friends and family, as well as what the person observed in his or her parents' behavior growing up, he notes.

Matthews suggests people take a long-term approach to fitness. Considered one of the healthiest ways to

curb stress levels, exercise releases feel-good brain chemicals called neurotransmitters, which can function like antidepressants, he says. He adds people need to also remember that exercise provides many long-term health benefits, so when — and if — the economy improves, you will still be able to reap the benefits of your fitness regimen. ■

### 7 Tips For Starting — And Maintaining — An Exercise Program

Psychologist J. Kip Matthews suggests:

1. Find a physical activity that you truly enjoy. It is easier to stay motivated if you're having fun.

2. Set goals for your exercise. These goals should be specific, measurable,

attainable, realistic, and have a timeline.

3. Recruit an exercise buddy. A buddy can help hold you accountable to your goals and provide support.

4. Keep an exercise log. Not only does a log provide you with continuous feedback about progress toward your goals, but it can also reinforce your efforts.

5. Stay with it. Establishing a new habit typically takes two to three weeks. If you miss one day, don't see it as failure.

6. Give yourself permission to be a little selfish. It's OK to be selfish when it comes to your personal health and making exercise a priority.

7. Realize making a change, even ones for the better, can be difficult. All changes, even positive ones, are stressful because we have to adapt to new challenges and opportunities. ■