

Energy Express: Spring is here! Three ways to plant the seeds of your own new growth

by Marilyn Preston

Springtime is the perfect time to celebrate fresh starts and new beginnings. Flowers bloom, trees blossom, birds rejoice, and all of nature awakens to new growth, new possibilities, new ways of being by the summer of 2009, when the wearing of revealing bathing suits often leads to depression.

But wait! You are part of nature, don't forget, and you, too, are wired for change and new growth in spring. But what? And how? As your most personal trainer, I offer up three ways you can spring into action during the coming weeks and months, three modest shifts in your thinking or behavior that can help you walk the greener, leaner, happier path to healthier living:

1. "Eat Unprocessed Real Food. Oh, just try it. For a week, a month or three months would be ideal. You'll have more energy, less bloat and fewer harmful additives. Look to First Lady Michelle Obama for inspiration and support. Just the other day she was serving up yummy and nutritious mushroom risotto lunches at her local community shelter, modeling the kind of volunteerism that is part of a healthier, happier lifestyle for all.

Out with the junk food juice boxes, the canned, processed, over-sugared and over-salted fake foods. In with her garden-fresh ideas about eating real food, fruits and veggies, locally grown and cleverly cooked.

"We can provide this kind of healthy food for communities across the country, and we can do it by each lending a hand," says First Lady Michelle, impressing America-at-large with her words, her deeds, and her biceps.

Start your research today. Are there community gardens in your area? If not, why not? How much space do you have in and around your house or apartment for growing greens, organic vegetables, fresh herbs? And question No. 1 if you are interested in raising kids who eat smarter, feel better and weigh less: How will you get your little ones involved?

2. "Start a Sport-Specific Spring Training Routine. When spring arrives, so does your inner golfer. Ditto your inner tennis player, swimmer, baseball player, cyclist, basketball player and more. Whatever your sport, plan this spring to crank it up a notch, learn new skills, get into a strength and flexibility training routine designed to improve your performance and reduce your risk of injury.

That's what spring training is for! Your first task is to think up a good goal for yourself. Be specific. Do you want faster feet for tennis? A tension-free swing for golf? Do you want to train for a marathon, improve your fielding skills, hit more free throws, jump higher at the volleyball net?

Once you decide on a realistic goal, give yourself all of spring to help you get there. Make a plan. Write it down. Find a teacher, join a class, buy some time with a coach or trainer who can give you sport-specific exercises for building strength, boosting endurance and increasing flexibility in ways that will help you relax and improve.

In spring you set your fitness goals. In summer you realize them. And even if you don't, you give yourself high fives for staying in the game and working to succeed.

â€” Plan For The Mental Game, Too. Spring is a great time to awaken to the importance of bringing your mind into play when it comes to enjoying sports, detoxifying the stress in your life, creating a calm and resilient spirit to help you through challenging times. Your body and your mind are one, you know, and the sooner you learn to use your breath to link and energize them, the better. Yoga is one ancient and wonderful way to experience that link, and it comes along with a thousand other benefits. But if you'd rather skip the mat and go directly to the playing field of your choice â€” Running? Biking? Hiking? â€” at least supplement your sports play with some spring training instruction in relaxation, visualization and deep breathing. I guarantee that will help your game more than any sports drink or protein powder. Your mental fitness will improve from other practices, too. You need to eat clean, real food, get enough sleep and exercise, and let go of anger, guilt, envy and other negative emotions that keep you from being your healthiest and best self.

ENERGY EXPRESS-O! DON'T OVERTHINK IT

"Sitting quietly, doing nothing, spring comes, and the grass grows by itself." â€” Zen proverb

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