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Helping People Get Simply Fit In More Ways Than One

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I Trained For Quadruple Bypass Surgery

“Do as I say not as I do,” a statement that we are all too familiar with. My dad was a WWII veteran and came home from the service with malaria, tuberculosis, and of course post-traumatic stress disorder. He was not athletic, but his eating habits would be those that would make any keto dieter proud. A protein, a vegetable, and a baked potato, that was dinner and nothing more; except for his desert which would be two Lucky Strike cigarettes. Yes, he smoked about a pack a day. But, he preached to me to never ever even think about smoking those cancer sticks. I listened even though many of my friends were already into the cigarette habit. The other thing that he made very clear was that exercise was essential for good health, even though because of cigarettes he had trouble walking a flight of stairs. The service, stress, and cigarettes took him from us at 68 years old because of a stroke. **Hold those thoughts.**

Forty years go pretty quick, at 66 I began to wonder if 68 was going to be the end of the line for me. My sister died of a stroke at 67 so I questioned my cardiologist about what could be done proactively to prevent my early demise. He told me that we should start with a coronary artery calcium scan, a simple test to measure the amount of calcium in your coronary arteries, which is a predictor of heart attack and stroke. A high score is 400, mine was 4,000. I was catheterized and it was discovered that much of the calcium was in the distal arteries of my heart, which was a good sign, I was put on a statin medication, and was told by my cardiologist that I had to be brutally honest with him regarding any chest pain that might come my way; I had no symptoms. That was February 2022.

I told my wife Pat that I was not going to get away with this. Now I was always an athlete, walking, weightlifting, jumping rope (yes jumping rope) and stretching were all part of my day and I was always looking for ways to get in extra steps or do a few push-ups. But knowing what I now knew, embarked on a high intensity program that included weighted jump ropes, dead lifts, weighted squats, rowing motion and walking 5 miles per day. July of 2022 I was working in the yard and got a pain under my sternum that felt like I just ran a 100 yard dash in 10 degree weather. It passed, and it didn't return until September; at that point I began to experience stable angina, which is pain on exertion and usually stops when you are at rest. I continued my intense exercise regimen and this went on until the end of the year. In January I visited my cardiologist and explained my symptoms. That was January 11, 2023. He immediately scheduled me for another catheterization on January 18, 2023.

On January 15, 2023 I went out for my walk, and after about one mile my stable angina began, which I was used to. The problem was it didn't stop after I was through exercising and got significantly worse. I texted my cardiologist (He has been my doctor for 20 years) and he told me to go to the emergency room. I made the risky decision to wait until the following morning. At 4 am I woke my wife and had her drive me to the ER. This was January 16 and I was scheduled to be catheterized on January 18. I was admitted to the hospital on the 16th and waited for the procedure.

I met with the doctor who was going to perform the procedure, he had also catheterized me the first time and we were both figuring on a stent or two. Not so, he came out of the cath lab and informed me that I was 99% blocked in the main artery of the heart along with 80-90% blocked in 3 other arteries of my heart. The only solution was coronary artery by-pass surgery. In reality, he was more disappointed than I was. I was sent back to my room, and the process began.

I had plenty of time to think. To think about my family history and how 20 years ago when I was going through a divorce smoked 5 packs of cigarettes a day. That was only for a short period of time but it was enough to cause such arterial inflammation that the only thing my body could do was to draw calcium to the site, which acted like spackle to protect the artery from rupturing. I also watched video after the video to help me understand what to expect throughout the process, ultimately surgery, and then post-surgery. I went into surgery around 3:30 pm on January 23, 2023.

I woke up the next day and knew from my research that I was going to have to cough up the oxygen tube in my throat which was going to hurt my chest a bit. One hard cough and it was out. I got up out of bed, with no problem, and stood up on my own with no problem and walked 1,000 steps first time out while I was still in intensive care to the amazement of all staff.

I trained for a quadruple by-pass, and it worked. My squats (getting out of the chair), 5 mile walks (leg strength and muscle memory). Not to mention I was able to get out of bed on my own and walk around the cardiac ward on my own, and I was sent home 5 days after surgery. Once home I walked almost 1 mile my first time out and was up to 1.5 miles in 2 weeks.

Before I left the hospital my surgeon came in and informed me that the intense exercise that I did protected my heart and allowed it to create a collateral blood supply. He also informed me that my heart was in great shape and that the arteries and veins that were used for the grafting were also and these are his words, pristine. He informed me that the exercise that I did strengthened my heart and with the new vessels should give me another 20-25 years. **Exercise is truly a new medicine.**

My desire for intense exercise hasn't changed. I am back jumping rope, weightlifting, and walking all pain free. It saved my life. Exercise doesn't have to be intense though, walking and lite weights can make all the difference in a person's health and wellbeing. **Having a personal trainer that understands the needs of those who are looking to grow young can truly be the missing piece to those who want to sustain a successful exercise program.**

My name is Jim Burns and at 68 years old I am a NASM Certified Personal Trainer. My goal as a CPT is to help those who are a bit older (my age) and want to grow a bit younger through exercise. I enjoy working with groups and individuals alike and I provide three very important components that I believe are the back bone for those who are our age.

1. Companionship Support

Having someone available to help motivate you and give you a little nudge when the desire for exercise just isn't there is so important. It keeps you from falling off the wagon of exercise and helps you meet your goals. I initially provide that companionship and will exercise with you until you get the hang of it, get on schedule and then help you discover others who are like minded and who will continue your exercise journey.

2. Instrumental Support

Instrumental support is when someone receives accurate information regarding behavior and a topic. Giving sound advice about how to achieve optimal health and fitness and providing education about the current recommendations for physical activity. Understanding what works and what doesn't at our age can be a daunting task. Things like how much time I need to walk each week, what exercises give me the greatest benefit in the shortest period of time, or how to walk in doors. I will provide that information for you and supply you with reading material that I have critiqued and would be appropriate to help you meet your goals. I also will critique equipment for you, things like exercise bands, weight equipment, and at times novelty items. If you like going to the gym I will schedule time to go with you and instruct you on how to use select pieces of equipment that I believe would benefit you in your journey.

3. Social Support

Exercising in a group can help create camaraderie and can be fun and at times a bit competitive. It points people in the same direction and provides an atmosphere of love, caring, and empathy. It also can help with the development of new friendships, interests, and create some positive habits.

Micro Workouts

Micro workouts' involve performing short, sharp bursts of resistance training, just ten minutes in length, multiple times throughout the day. Well that's the dictionary definition anyway. My thoughts, if you are waiting in your car for your spouse instead of sitting, take a walk. If it takes 3 minutes to brew your coffee do a set of squats, or do ten pushups off of a counter. There are many variations but the bottom line is to always keep moving.

So Many Ways

There are so many things that can be done at our age to stay in shape and experience good health. **It just has to be made a priority.** There are skill related activities like bowling, pickle ball, and walking with the use of hand weights (power walking), swimming or maybe just playing with your grandchildren.

It is your health, so don't wait for something to go wrong, anyone can exercise at any age. Before you start check with your doctor to make sure that you don't have any silent issues going on within your body that would prevent you from exercising. Once cleared let me help you find your exercise niche, I will provide you with a brief physical assessment, and get you on the path to growing young.

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About Jim Burns



Jim has always understood the benefits of exercise and is an advocate of helping schools build more activity time into student schedules to keep our children active and above all healthy. Jim is certified by the National Academy Of Sports Medicine (NASM) as a personal trainer and believes that exercise is the first step in reducing stress and becoming balanced mentally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. As an educator Jim believes that knowledge is power and that everyone should understand the benefits of exercise.

“I Trained For A Quadruple Bypass” (contained in this packet) explains his journey from the understanding one’s own health and how one can ready themselves physical, mentally, and spiritually and do so without fear. Having a history of heart disease and stroke in his family Jim has learned that we are not determined by our genetics we are only influenced, and we can change our response to the influence at any time

Jim’s Prior Work In Education

Jim worked for almost 45 years as a school administrator, teacher, and still is college instructor, and a seminar leader. He is committed to helping administrators, parents, and teachers establish standards of excellence and to help them build successful relationships with their family, friends, and colleagues. He wrote and designed The Bully Proof Classroom, a graduate course that is offered at The College of New Jersey and La Salle University in Pennsylvania in partnership with The Regional Training Center and is endorsed by the New Jersey Education Association. Jim was awarded the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in recognition for his work in the area of anti-bullying. He has also written several books on the topic of anti-bullying and classroom climate. “Anti-Bullying 101” remains a great resource for teachers, administrator, support staff, and parents as it provides permanent help in dealing with unruly behavior and can be used as part of any anti-bullying program. Jim lives in Manahawkin NJ with his wife Pat and daughter Zoe. He also has two older daughters, Sarah and Grace both of whom live in Florida.