

## New Year's Advice from Fitness Professional Jacqueline Carter

by **Kat Avila**

It's that time of year again when people start looking at their waists and either consider joining a gym or overhauling their current fitness program. I asked friend and fitness professional Jacqueline Carter if she would help jumpstart the fitness newbies among JADE Magazine's readers.

Jacqueline's choice of profession is surprising given that she found out as a teenager that she had scoliosis, a side-to-side curvature of the spine that can be life-threatening. She endured major surgery; most of her vertebrae are fused together and two rods run the length of her spine to hold it in place. Her inspiring success story has been featured in SHAPE Magazine.

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### *Where do you work and what is your title?*

I work in a variety of settings. The catch-all phrase that I typically use as my title is Fitness Professional; however, I have other titles that are reflected in the various positions that I hold. For example, I work as a continuing education provider for [Resist-A-Ball®](#). For this particular position, I am referred to as a Master Trainer. My role as a Master Trainer involves training and certifying other fitness professionals in the use of stability balls.

I also work as a personal trainer at a gym where my title is Senior Executive Personal Fitness Trainer. There are various levels of training offered at this location and the title reflects the level of the trainer. Other titles include Senior Fitness Trainer and Personal Fitness Trainer.

### *What qualifications do you bring to your work?*

I hold several degrees: both Master of Science and Bachelor of Science degrees in Kinesiology from California State University at Fullerton and an Associate's Degree from Stephens College, a private college in Columbia, Missouri. In addition to my degrees, I have been certified since 1987 and hold thirteen certifications in a variety of different areas including personal training and group exercise. I also hold a specialty certification as a FallProof™ Balance & Mobility Instructor.

### *What does your orientation program for new clients cover?*

Our first session revolves around finding out about the client. This entails having the client fill out a health history form and going through a fitness assessment. This health history allows me to find out more about the client's exercise history and any health conditions I might need to consider when designing the exercise program. All this information is then used to put together a personalized workout based on the client's goals, fitness level, and current health status.

This process also allows us to screen for potential conditions that might require the attention of a medical professional, in which case, the client is referred back to their doctor. We also discuss the client's goals for their program and I give them a sense of what to expect in the sessions ahead. If time allows, we might begin addressing the client's exercise program.

### *Many people will make New Year's resolutions to lose weight or to get in better physical shape. What's your advice for them?*

Consistency is crucial. Plan on making a firm commitment to stay with a program. It is not unusual for people to drop out of exercising shortly after they start or to be inconsistent in keeping with a program. In fact, after the holidays, the gyms are filled with people who

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eventually drop out. This scenario is all too common.

In order to get results and to sustain them, it is necessary to stick with it. One should plan on setting time aside for exercise and set realistic goals for the program. Exercising should be treated in the same manner as brushing your teeth; it should be something that you set aside time for on a regular basis. I highly recommend that those who have never exercised before should seek the advice of a professional who is both experienced and educated.

A trained professional can help you outline realistic goals and chart out a plan for achieving them. Many people hire personal trainers for the accountability it gives them. Having an appointment to meet with someone else minimizes excuses for not getting it done.

*There's "mindless movement" and "mindful movement." Would you please explain the difference and how it impacts one's level of fitness?*

I think of “mindless movement” as exercise that is done without much thought. In other words, one becomes disengaged from the experience and, consequently, may not get the best results. An example of this is an individual who has been educated about the proper form of an exercise, but tunes out somewhere in the process.

This can be readily observed in gyms. An all-too-common scenario is when people hang over the edges of the railings on stair climbers. This can result in a reduction in the amount of calories being burned. Granted the railings do serve a purpose, but they are not meant to be held onto for dear life. If one has to hold on that hard, the speed is set too fast. It would be better to slow down a bit and gain some control over the movement, i.e., being more “mindful.” Contrary to what one’s perception might be, this actually results in more physiological work, as opposed to just hanging on tightly while the machine moves and the participant struggles to keep up. The perception here is that one is working hard, therefore, it must be doing something. But it takes a lot more work to actually step up and down and load the weight upon one's feet. The bottom line for this situation is to get some control over the movement and master the form before increasing the speed.

Excessive momentum without the proper form could be potentially damaging. I try to teach people to think about focusing on learning the movements first, then begin to build from there. Often people do not gradually progress and wind up performing exercises incorrectly at high intensities, as is the case in the example I’ve given. I liken it to the control that an athlete has: they are very focused on attaining the skills necessary to achieve optimal performance, they do not fling their bodies. This warrants adopting a mindset where one has a purpose with respect to the exercise and laying the foundation for executing the exercise in good form.

*JADE Magazine's target audience is Asian/Asian-American women in their 20s and 30s. Is there anything especially that this group needs to watch out for?*

The first thing that comes to mind is osteoporosis, a disease that is commonly found in women that is characterized by porous bones and an increasing rate of bone loss. Women will tend to start losing bone early in life and this can be accelerated after menopause by anywhere from three to five years. This is a result of estrogen loss and estrogen helps govern calcium levels in the bones. The risk factors for osteoporosis include, not only being female, but also being of Asian descent.

The good news is that there are things that can be done to offset the risk and one should take the steps to minimize the risk as early as possible. After the age of 35, we begin to lose bone mass. Diet and exercise can effect this process. Building as much bone as possible during one’s youth and as a young adult can provide a higher threshold for later in life when bone loss will accelerate.

Some things to think about in terms of measures of prevention include:

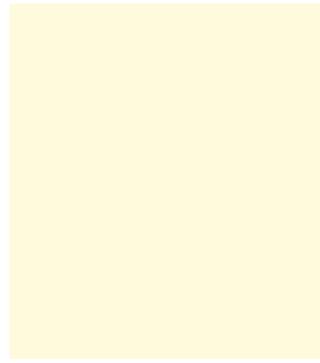
- o Get enough calcium in one’s diet.
- o Keep an eye out for more information about soy products. Researchers recently found that the isoflavones found in some soy products decreased calcium loss compared to animal proteins. (The structure of isoflavones is similar to that of estrogen.)
- o Include weight-bearing exercise in one’s exercise routine, i.e., running, walking. Include lifting weights in one’s exercise routine.
- o Avoid consuming excessive alcohol.

o Don't smoke.

o Keep body weight at recommended levels. Having too little weight is another risk factor.

o Avoid overexercising - this can cause menstruation to cease through lowered estrogen levels, especially if coupled with weight loss.

*Jacqueline, thank you for sharing your expertise with our readers. We hope to be able to talk with you again soon!*



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