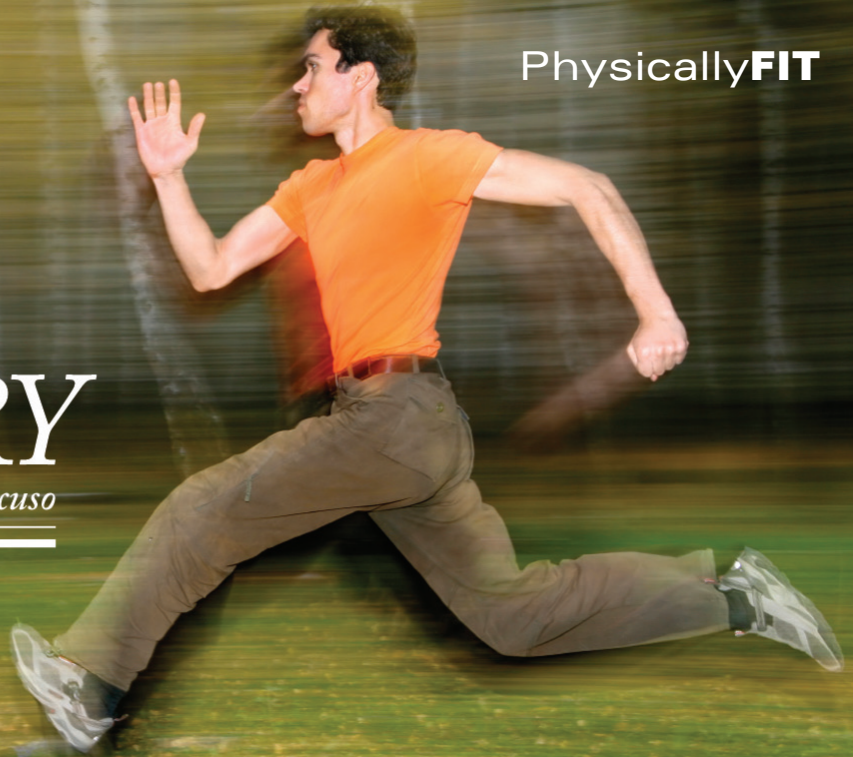


the **THRILL** of **VICTORY**

by Gina Mancuso



Getting enough exercise is critical to your physical and mental health—this fact is undisputed. Finding the time, the energy and the motivation are the daunting obstacles of reality. Now is the time to discover what motivates you, what drives you to action. If you are not satisfied with your current level of fitness, your weight or the way you look and feel, do something different to achieve something different.

Find Your Groove

Making the time to workout and to effectively fuel your body is easier when you can get excited about exercise and healthy eating. If you have been working out two or three times a week for months without seeing any results, it's easy to be discouraged. Evaluate your entire program, (nutrition, hydration and exercise routine) to discover how to step out of the rut and get into your groove.

What's the first step? Find your motivation! Dream about something that you have always wanted to do; run a 10K, bike to the shore, climb Mt. Everest, compete in a triathlon. If you can dream it-you can do it! Working towards a goal will make your journey to fitness an incredible experience.

Get Out of Your Comfort Zone

Challenge is the key to self improvement. If you keep doing what you have always done, you will keep getting the same results that you have grown to accept. If you are not ready to accept status quo, do something different! When it comes to exercise, your body gets used to doing the same thing over and over. If you are frustrated by the fact that you are exercising, but your body isn't

responding as you would like, it's time to get out of the box. Step it up a notch! Do something that seems a little bit scary, something you never imagined you could do. Do it for personal pride, for the thrill of competition or the physical challenge. Not only will you surprise yourself --you'll get into fabulous shape at the same time. According to Laura Haymann, a Customer Experience Executive at Wachovia, it was the excitement and anxiety of training for her first sprint triathlon. "I knew I needed a target, something to dangle in front of me to give me that boost...to get myself going." Says Haymann, "It's all a mental game, you really can do anything you put your mind to."

Sign Up!

OK, you are over the first mental hurdle--you have made your decision to do something different. Now what? As Haymann

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knows, a great way to kick up your exercise routine is to challenge yourself to a race. A 5K, 10K and half-marathon races are abundant in the greater Philadelphia area. If running is not your thing, try a biking, swimming or rowing event. There are so many events from which to choose. Find your passion or your cause and just do it. Haymann knew that she wanted to challenge herself physically, but was concerned about the effects a long distance run would have on her knees. She was encouraged by her personal trainer, Cynthia Brown-Fontanez, to consider a sprint triathlon (0.5 mile swim, 12-17 mile bike and 3.1 mile run), which turned out to be the perfect carrot to dangle in Haymann's path.

If you are not ready to consider a run, don't count yourself out. There are many events which include walking—a great way to get and stay in shape. To plug a personal favorite, the American Diabetes Association is sponsoring Step Up to Fight Diabetes, a ten-mile walk incorporating 1,000 steps in and around the city of Philadelphia. It's not too late to start training for this October event. Whether you walk, bike, swim, row or run, find and register for an event, grab a friend and get started today!

Your Training Program

You've made a decision; you've registered for an event—what's next? Get a plan. According to Brown-Fontanez, also an accomplished triathlete and marathon runner, your next step is to develop a training program to get you into peak physical condition for race day. "Overtraining is as harmful as under-training. Create a plan that allows for a gradual increase in mileage and a period of time to taper. Gains in strength, endurance, and speed take place in the middle of your training program." Make sure your program is designed to allow a steady increase in mileage. "Begin to taper your total weekly mileage starting three to four weeks prior to the race", suggests Brown-Fontanez.

Once you have developed a plan, stick to it! Your plan won't work if it exists only on paper. By the way, you can't get good at running (or biking or swimming) simply by reading about it. There are a few simple ways to make sticking to your program easier.

- **Train with a partner.** Being accountable to someone else makes it much more difficult to skip a workout. When you are on the starting line together, you have someone to share in the excitement of the moment. When Haymann lost her training partner (due to a job relocation), she knew she had gone as far as she could on her own. This is when she hired Brown-Fontanez. "Some people spend their money on hair and nails; I have a personal trainer!"

- **Schedule it in.** Plan your workouts as you plan your work meetings and commitments. You wouldn't think of not showing up for a meeting with your supervisor, extend that same respect to your workout regime.

- **Vary your workouts.** Change your running/biking route, workout at a different time of day, play tennis or basketball. Doing something different every few days takes the monotony out of the program without sacrificing an exercise session.

Brown-Fontanez adds "Don't underestimate the perks of cross training, weight-lifting, yoga and Pilates during your training program. The benefits of having a strong core are undeniable. The stronger your muscles are the better you perform. Cross-training and weight-training also keep your routine fresh. Yoga and Pilates are great ways to strengthen your core, but also are extremely helpful in injury prevention."

Do something different to get something different.

Create your dream, develop a plan and then execute, execute, execute. Rejuvenate your exercise routine by getting out of your comfort zone. If you have never competed before, enter a 5K race. If you have several 5K races under your belt, take that next step and enter a half-marathon. You CAN do it. If you can walk a mile, you can walk ten. Take your body to its limit and be exhilarated. Yes, taking that step can be scary and risky, but nothing worthwhile was ever gained by rolling along comfortably forever. Thomas Edison said "If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves." Take it from Laura Haymann, "Once you overcome a huge hurdle by doing something you never thought you could do—the possibilities are endless."

You deserve all the benefits that challenging your mind and your body will bring. Step up to the starting line. You deserve to experience the thrill of victory.

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