

## BODY STRENGTH AND TONE

At the beginning of the semester, we were tasked with creating a list of four health / fitness goals. My first goal was to maintain a healthier lifestyle by committing to a more nutritious diet. Within a few weeks, I certainly learned that this was going to be much more difficult than I had originally anticipated. About three quarters of the way through the semester I completed our "Food Journal" assignment, which essentially required us to document our eating habits for 14 days. Throughout the first week, I was very disappointed in myself. I quickly learned that I have adopted very poor eating habits. I decided that, for the second week, I would try much harder to make healthier choices. Although my eating habits the second week were not *ideal*, I certainly noticed significant improvement. Since that time, I have gradually adopted a much more appropriate meal plan. Of course, I still surrender to unhealthy food / drink choices from time to time. But, overall, I feel that I have worked towards the accomplishment of this particular goal.

My second goal for the semester was to drink more water. I definitely have a history of choosing less nutritious beverages, and limiting my water intake. Sure, I knew that water was an important part of a well-balanced and nutritious diet, but that knowledge had little effect on my daily routine. Within the first few weeks of this body strength and toning course, however, I learned a lot about the importance and the long-term benefits of adequate water intake. Of all four of my predetermined goals, I feel as though I have had the most success with this one. Over the past 8-12 weeks, I have increased my daily water intake to at least 64 ounces. Prior to taking this class, I would drink maybe 16 ounces a day, so this is a huge accomplishment for me. In increasing my water intake substantially, I have noticed improvement in various health conditions as well. My acne has cleared significantly, I have had less urinary tract infections (which is unusual for me because I get them chronically), and I have had less caffeine-related headaches.

The next goal was to maintain a more active lifestyle. This has been somewhat challenging for me in the past as I have not had adequate training or guidance in pursuing my fitness goals. Ultimately, I hoped to take the exercises, stretches, and corresponding information that I learned in this course and incorporate them into my daily/weekly routine. As we approach the end of the semester and I take the time to reflect on my goals, I realize that I have not done nearly as well on this goal as I had hoped. I have participated in the suggested activities once a week in class, but have failed to commit to a regular exercise routine outside of class. Since the beginning of the semester, I have participated in an exercise routine at my local gym several times, but not on a routine basis. I attribute my failure to commit to this goal to a very busy schedule. I work full time, I am a single mother, and I am taking four different college classes. Of course, this shouldn't be an excuse. As the semester comes to an end, I am hoping that I will have more time to focus on my health and get my body back to where it used to be.

My final goal was to lose one pound every 1-2 weeks, with a total of 8 pounds by the end of the semester in December (2017). As discussed above, my diet and exercise habits have not improved nearly as much as I had hoped they would at the beginning of the semester. As a result, I have not reached my goal weight. I have lost about three pounds, which is a slight accomplishment. In taking this course, I have acquired very useful knowledge and tools regarding my health and wellness. Moving forward, I plan to use these tools to work towards and ultimately achieve my goals.

In conclusion, I have certainly learned a lot about health and fitness this semester. Not only have I learned the importance of adequate water intake and the importance of a well-balanced and nutritious diet, I have also learned exercise routines, stretches, and even appropriate warm-ups and cool-downs. Although I did not meet all of my predetermined goals for the semester, I am very pleased with the progress I have made and I truly believe that the knowledge I have acquired has pushed me in the right direction. I will continue to use this information to work towards my goals.