

Living on WELL Street Blog: "Walk! Don't run!"

By Michael White

Did the title conjure up childhood voices of a parent or teacher sternly encouraging you to slow down? If so, rewind and replay it in a gentle, kind and inviting way...“Please, consider walking. The physical, emotional and social benefits can be even greater than running.”

I live in a 30-story apartment building. It's a wonderful mix of ages, races, religions, nationalities and incomes. It's a true melting pot. Recently, we began a walking club, “Holy Walkamole” - not my choice for a title, but one that reflects the spirited community life in the building. Posters announcing the club were put up in high traffic areas. Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:00 am were the designated walking days. And, a one-mile safe-walking route was mapped.

No one attended the first day. However, on the second day, a young Chinese woman showed up with her 7-month old daughter in a stroller. She spoke very good English and we enjoyed a wonderful conversation. She has continued to participate and says that her husband will be joining us soon. I am confident that our small “international” walking club will continue to expand and provide many more opportunities to meet interesting people.

From a health and well-being perspective, walking can be more beneficial than running. I am also a runner, but have never found running with someone to be a positive experience. I either want to run slower (usually) or faster than my running partner. It quickly becomes an anti-social activity!

I have come to appreciate walking clubs as one of the most practical and positive ways to get people engaged in physical activity, whether at home, work or in a faith community. The commitment to regular walking can be the “gateway” activity that leads to other lifestyle changes, e.g. improved diet, increased sleep, more water consumption, etc. A mile-per-day can be done in less than 30 minutes. It costs nothing. Your physical and emotional health improves. You live longer. And, when you include others, your social well-being is enhanced. What else provides those kinds of benefits?

Don't let another day go by. Invite your co-workers, family, friends and/or neighbors to join you. Give your club a hokey name (“Holy Walkamole” is taken!) and encourage them to “Walk! Don't Run!”

Live WELL!

Michael

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