

## From Couch Potato to Exercise Enthusiast

by *Bobbie Blackwood-Rushe*

est our heart rates got was when we were nearing the designated feed zone and it appeared closed. Thankfully, it was a mirage. We proceeded to consume the requisite number of simple carbohydrates at the local donut shop. Unlike the old times, we both had to hurry back to take care of our kids.

There are many people who jump through hoops in order to ride or race their bikes. Getting up at unworldly hours to train or to drive themselves or their kids or loved-ones to races; organizing care-giving, time off work, car pools... somehow we manage to do it. The more I ride and help other people reach their potential, the more I realize how much I love this sport. When I feel the sincere appreciation of the riders I coach or those twinges of fitness I used to have, it makes it worthwhile. Riding keeps me grounded. Two-year-olds have a way of making you feel absolutely wonderful and insanely crazy.

By the way, when I was washing the bike I noticed that the big ring was just as filthy as the small. This could mean that I am fitter than I think or that I need a bigger gear just to hang on to the group. I would like to think that it is the former.

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*L'auteure explique comment son amour de l'exercice quotidien a changé sa vie.*

I wasn't always an athlete, or sportif, as my French Canadian friend would say. I suppose I've ridden the exercise see-saw for the last 15 of my almost 30 years. Grade school up to grade ten, I ran, long-jumped, skipped, and enjoyed every minute and it wasn't even a conscious decision. There was definitely no effort involved. Then exercise lost its appeal and junk food, drinking, and recreational smoking took over. Then at 22, I entered Bally Matrix and my life and thighs have never been the same.

I suppose I would have to now admit that I am actually one of those people who likes to exercise. Not that I've ever reached that high the runners gush about (even running 40 minutes straight brought on no high but definite laboured breathing), but I do reach a level of calm. Exercise does tend to mellow me out to a certain degree. (Perhaps it is exhaustion!) Doctors and exercise enthusiasts say exercise causes a release of endorphins which in turn does something to your body and generally makes you a happier person and more serene. I know it has trimmed my thighs, shaped my calves, lifted my butt, and reduced my percentage of fat. All this adds up to looking better in our clothes.

I must admit that my exercise regime took on a new importance when I got pregnant. It made me limber and prevented me from lying prone on the couch with a box of chocolates and a small hand-pack from Baskin Robbins. Granted it got quite uncomfortable to run with a basketball sized lump under my tee shirt, but a Keli Roberts step tape came to the rescue and I continued to exercise until two days before my son was born.

Praised by my doctor for keeping my weight gain at a most reasonable 25 pounds, I stand by exercise as a partner and friend. Dropping the weight in six weeks was close to effortless and my son and I walk daily and I run in the evenings.

What does all this personal stuff really mean and why should you or anyone else care? I can say as a former couch potato that you can do it, you should do it, and you'll feel better when you do it. They gym is not for everyone, nor is running, but just get movin'. If Oprah can galvanize an entire league of non exercisers, there must be something to it. Try it, it's almost painless. Almost!!!!

*Bobbie Blackwood-Rushe lives in Mississauga with her six-month-old son. She enjoys writing and has recently begun writing with the intention of publishing.*