

## CHAPTER 10

# Change Your Life Through Fitness With 10 Easy Steps

By Sean Millhouse

I'm often asked who my best success story is. In 14 years, I have had quite a few that I could share:

- clients that have lost 100+ pounds
- people who have completed their first marathon and
- moms that were finally able to lose the “baby weight”

But I believe my absolute best (and favorite) client success story has to be Mary.

When I first heard Mary's story, she was an absolute mess. Mary's life had taken control of her. She was a single mother working a full-time job during the day, and taking care of her ailing parents at night. Mary spent her days as a nurse taking care of patients that were too sick to take care of themselves. And when Mary made it home, she took care of her 12 year old daughter and elderly parents. On a good night, she had a few minutes to herself to sit down and watch some mindless television. During the weekend, Mary would spend the entire day with her daughter doing whatever sounded fun.

Mary's life became so hectic that she had absolutely no time for herself to exercise, read or take a vacation. And at some point, cooking

was replaced with fast food on most nights. She was so busy taking care of others, she didn't have time to take care of herself. Mary had gained 30 pounds in less than 3 years. She was not fitting into her clothes, she was depressed, and she was tired of feeling tired. Mary knew she needed to change something, but she didn't know where to start. She needed help!

During our initial consultation, Mary and I both agreed that the path she was on was not healthy for her or her loved ones. She had come to a cross-road. I explained to her that her fitness journey would not be easy. But I promised her that it would be worth every step of the way. The following 10 Steps are how we changed Mary's life through Fitness. You too can follow the same steps and enjoy the life-changing benefits.

## **1. TAKE A LOOK IN THE MIRROR**

Before you can address a problem, you have to know what the problem is. Some people walk through life overweight, out of shape and/or unhealthy and they are perfectly ok with it. Good for them (I guess). However, most people that I know and meet are not happy with something about their health and fitness. There is some facet in their health and fitness that they want to change. This step is really something that only you can do yourself. What part of your health and fitness do you want to change?

In Mary's case, her life was out of control. She did not want to buy bigger clothes, she wanted to get off her depression medication and she wanted to start feeling good again. Mary woke up one day and just said enough was enough. She wanted to lose weight, start eating healthier and incorporating an exercise program. But she didn't know where to start. That's when she came to the conclusion that she needed help.

## **2. HIRE A FITNESS COACH**

Have you ever noticed that all the best athletes in the world have a coach? Think about that for a second. Athletes that are already excellent at their sport know that it is critical to have a coach to help make them even better. So, if you want to make a change in your health and

fitness, you should hire a fitness coach.

When Mary hired me as her fitness coach, she was a little reluctant. She didn't know what a fitness coach was supposed to do. I explained to Mary that a great fitness coach would be what she needed him/her to be. Some days she may need a cheerleader and other days it might need to be a teacher. I shared with her that the best fitness coaches will be there every step of the way for her. I let Mary know that before I started creating her program, we have to sit down and do a complete fitness assessment.

### **3. RIP OFF THE BAND-AID**

Now that you are aware of your problem(s) and you have found your guide in your health and fitness journey, it's time to do some assessments. If you want to get directions to a destination, you have to know where you are at now. Your health and fitness are no different. There are several different fitness assessments that can be performed to get you a good idea of where you are. Some of my favorites are:

- Functional Movement Screen (to assess quality of movement)
- Blood Pressure
- Bodyweight
- Body Fat percentage
- Body Composition
- Endurance Test
- Strength Test

During my assessment of Mary, I took her Blood Pressure, Bodyweight, Body Fat percentage, Body Composition and Strength Test. Here were her results:

- BP: 139/87

This is a borderline high reading. I encouraged her to visit with her doctor to get a history established.

- Bodyweight: 217 lbs.

I'm not a big fan of taking bodyweight as a stand-alone measurement. However, this is definitely high for a 43 year old female who is 5'3"

- Body Fat Percentage: 39.3%

This is high for a female of any age. I usually like to see it at 20-25%.

- Body Composition:

131.7 lbs of lean muscle, bone and tissue. When you are starting an exercise program, this number should go up a little or at the very least be maintained. I never want to see this number go down as you lose weight.

85.3 lbs of Fat. This number definitely needs to come down.

- 0 Push-ups and 13 crunches in 60 seconds

These results are poor. They indicate that Mary is deconditioned.

## 4. DEFINE SUCCESS

To achieve success in anything you do in life, you have to define what success is. With your health and fitness program you should make clear goals of what you want to accomplish. For some people, that might be losing 75 lbs, for others it may be to bench press 300 lbs one time. It could even be a simple goal of walking up two flights of steps without getting out of breath. The point is, you need to be as specific as possible. It is also a good idea to put a deadline on your goal. Again, be specific.

With Mary, we decided to focus on one number: Body Fat Percentage. I explained to her that if this number went in the right direction, everything else should follow. We set a goal of getting below 25% in 9 months. Losing more than a 1/3 of her Body Fat sounded like an insurmountable task. So we broke it down into smaller goals. Her monthly goal was to lose 1.5%, and that's it. That is a very realistic and doable goal. Mary finally had a glimmer of hope...now she wanted to know how to do it.

## 5. MAKE A FITNESS PLAN

Having a goal without a plan is like rowing across the Atlantic Ocean to England without a paddle. You need to have the tools to get you there. A health and fitness plan can be ‘super simple’ or extremely complicated – depending on your goals and current fitness level. For someone trying to improve their endurance, it may be as simple as tracking your caloric intake and walking 10,000 steps in a day. For an elite athlete, it may get as involved as how many hours a day to train, refueling the body on a very strict schedule and getting a certain amount of sleep. But all fitness plans have the same 4 basic components: Strength Training, Endurance Exercise, Supportive Nutrition and Recovery/Flexibility.

For Mary we came up with the following initial fitness plan:

**(i). Strength Training** – Mary was to complete 2 days per week (Monday and Thursday) of a total body strength training circuit. She did 2 sets of 10 repetitions on 7 different exercises in a circuit fashion. It took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. She did this immediately after work before she went home.

**(ii). Endurance Exercise** – She was instructed to walk at a brisk pace for an hour total (20 minutes before work, 20 minutes during lunch, and 20 minutes after work) on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. When she was finished with the strength circuit, she was given an interval bicycle workout for 16 minutes. She alternated pedaling with more resistance (level 10) for 1 minute and pedaling with less resistance (level 3) for 1 minute.

**(iii). Supportive Nutrition** – Mary was asked to start journaling her food and fluid intake. I asked her to write down the time she was eating, amounts of each food and amount of fluid intake. I showed her how to use an online calorie counter so that she could start consuming between 1600-1800 calories per day. We spent a lot of time going over making healthier choices.

**(iv). Recovery/Flexibility** – I came up with five pre-workout “warm-up” exercises for Mary to perform before each strength training session. In addition, I showed her a series of static and dynamic stretches as well as foam roll exercises to complete after each exercise day. We also discussed the importance of getting regular sleep each night to allow her body to recover properly.

## 6. TAKE ACTION

This is the step that loses a lot of people. You have done all the hard work in making the plan, now you just have to implement it. Make a commitment to yourself that you **WILL** do this for the next month... no excuses. Creating new habits is how you will succeed. To borrow a phrase from Nike: **Just Do It!**

This is the step where Mary excelled! She was like a race car that just had to be pointed in the right direction. Once I gave her the plan, she was like clock-work from week 1. This is the point when I knew Mary was going to succeed – no matter what.

## 7. RE-EVALUATE

Everyone wants to see progress when they are working hard. A very important part of the process is to Re-Evaluate and track your progress. I recommend re-measuring every 4-6 weeks. Did you improve these past several weeks? Or did you stay the same...or worse, back track? In either scenario, it's critical to know.

I remember going into Mary's first re-evaluation. She was certain that she hadn't made any progress. Remember, Mary's first goal was to lose 1.5% in her first month. Guess what: she shattered it! Mary dropped 3.2% bodyfat. She was high on life! I was so proud of her, and you could see she was proud of herself. These results further motivated her to keep going.

## **8. WEATHER THE COURSE**

Every great plan has to be flexible and every motivated person has a hurdle to overcome. Maybe it's too hot to walk outside. Then you have to modify your plan. Maybe you join a gym or buy a treadmill. But you don't stop. You may have a bad day or week, and you miss a workout or two. Don't get down on yourself! You have to get right back on track.

For Mary, time was her biggest hurdle. During her 3rd month she only dropped 0.7% bodyfat. As you recall she had several people that depended on her care (her 12 year old and elderly parents). Mary was finding that working out after getting off work was proving to be a big challenge. So we adapted her program a bit. She actually found that it was easier to get up early and go to the gym before work. So we changed her program to be completed before work and during lunch. Mary loved it...and flourished!

## **9. REAP THE REWARDS**

Everyone wants to feel good about themselves. People like to be rewarded for their hard work. So I think it's a great idea to come up with some good rewards for yourself as you improve your health and fitness. Maybe it's a new wardrobe, a massage, or a new pair of running shoes. You can even put a picture of your reward on your mirror to help motivate you.

Poor Mary had been wearing baggy sweat pants since I met her. All of her old clothes didn't fit properly and she didn't like the way they fit her. My suggestion to her was to buy a new pair of "skinny jeans" when she hit 25% body fat. And guess what, she did. Those jeans looked 'pretty darn awesome' on her!

## 10. MAKE IT PERMANENT

Your health and fitness should be one of your top priorities throughout life. I know that life can sometimes force you to put yourself on the back burner. However, you have to find ways to make sure your new health and fitness lifestyle is permanent. Find ways to make it fun and fresh. I recommend that you find an event to train for. Maybe it's a half (or full) marathon, a 100 mile bike ride, or a long hiking trip. When you have a reason to work out, it becomes easier to do.

After Mary hit her 25% bodyfat goal, she set her sights on a high adventure vacation with her daughter. 18 months after I met Mary, she went on a trip to Colorado and mountain biked more than 50 miles, white-water rafted and hiked some of the most beautiful trails that Colorado had to offer. Not bad for a lady who couldn't do one push-up when I met her. I now see Mary every 6-8 months, and I can't wait to hear what new adventure she has planned.

Are you ready to change your life through fitness? If you follow the same 10 steps that Mary did, you can enjoy the life-changing benefits. Maybe you can put on a pair of skinny jeans. Or you can walk up a few flights of stairs without gasping for air. Who knows, you may decide to run your first marathon. Whatever you want from your life, NOW is the time to go after it!



## About Sean

Sean Millhouse is the head personal trainer and owner of Fitness 101. He is also a partner in Northwest Personal Training Center (Northwest Houston's largest Personal Training Facility). Sean and his businesses have helped more than 3500 clients meet their goals through the development of healthy fitness and eating habits.

Sean has been an ACE Certified Personal Trainer for 14 years and holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Houston - Downtown. Through ACE, he is also an Advanced Health and Fitness Specialist.

Through his multiple Personal Fitness Programs... Sean has worked with several local celebrities and successful business owners in the Northwest Houston area. His focus is on helping people who have lost control of their lives. Sean teaches that if we start practicing moderation, we can achieve balance and live a healthy lifestyle.

To help change lives through fitness...Sean offers his knowledge for lunch-and-learn opportunities, health and fitness seminars, and various charity functions.

Sean also publishes a Blog at: [www.fitness-101.com](http://www.fitness-101.com) and a weekly e-newsletter "Fit For Life" that help readers stay current with health and fitness topics. Archived articles are available on the blog.

For more information on Fitness 101's programs Visit their website at: [www.fitness-101.com](http://www.fitness-101.com).