

BACK YARD OLYMPICS

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

I saw on the news the other night that following the Olympic Games there has been a marked interest in people renewing memberships at the gym, and also thinking more seriously about a healthy lifestyle. Lets face it, just looking at those finely tuned, muscle powered bodies charging around the track, jumping great heights, peddling like crazy and swimming like dolphins makes you want to do something. Many are totally unfit yet we, as human beings, are physically capable of doing way, way more than we can imagine.

So, why do we slip into laziness over our fitness? For me, there are two simple reasons. One is that I have to make space in my daily routine. You know, that routine that I cling to every day that excludes physical fitness! The other reason is putting in the effort required to complete that exercise. Periodically, I galvanize myself into action for several weeks and the longer I stick at it the better I feel. I am taking off weight and I am eating less. But somehow, almost unbeknown to my conscious thought, I quietly slither back into my old habits and away goes my 'get fit and get healthy' resolve.

So, what has this prelude got to do with our children? Kids today are doing far less in the way of physical activity than ever before. Technology has them sitting for long periods instead of enjoying good old outdoor play. Our lifestyle has led to consuming convenience foods rather than fresh veggies and fruits. The large amount of processed food we eat, and the vast quantities of saturated fat we devour without burning it off through exercise, has made many of us overweight and ill.

Homemade dinners are simply the best for quality control and schools are now supposed to be providing more nutritious foods for lunch. Why not go a bit further and educate your children about the best foods to choose when they are away from home.

Perhaps now, following the Olympic Games, while motivation is high, it is a perfect time to introduce a simple fitness program for our families. Seriously, include it in your daily routine. You don't have a routine? Then this is also a perfect opportunity to create one of those, too. Just half an hour of physical activity together as a family will make a huge difference. Not only does exercise build muscle tone, but it also increases the oxygen flow to the brain allowing us to think faster and more clearly.

Create your own back yard Olympics for the whole family by performing assorted activities, at a particular time of day over the period of a week. Activities may include half an hour of walking interspersed with running one day, playing a vigorous ball game in the back yard another day, doing gymnastic moves like

hand stands, cartwheels, forward rolls, walking a plank, spider walking etc the next day. By daily varying the program you will be surprised how much fun it can be, and the great thing is that you are playing together as a family. In the winter, it might be possible to use an indoor play area, walk in the mall without getting distracted by what's in the store windows, or even walk in the rain.

Along with physical fitness comes the need to cut down on sedentary activity like constantly watching TV, incessant texting, playing computer games and so on. Of course, by playing physical games every day, there is less down time anyway.

Ask your children who they most admired or the sport they most enjoyed in the Olympic Games. Would they like to pursue a particular sport? Encourage your children by helping them set physical goals and talk to them about practicing to become excellent. If you get your kids involved in sports (other hobbies or interest groups if they are not particularly sport orientated), you will find they are far less likely to get into trouble because they become absorbed in their passion/ interest. They will do better at school because they are involved in something they really enjoy doing, and are being praised for doing well. It takes discipline and all-out effort to maintain the program you set. You never know, you may just have an Olympian in the making!

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.