

THE BATTALION

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Exercise builds more than firm thighs, flat gut

Working out, eating right will help stop 'wheezing'

AJA HENDERSON Columnist



I could feel the eyes of my favorite professor and the entire class focused on me. I had just finished the long journey to class, and the final, treacherous stairs to the fourth floor of the Academic building had left me completely winded.

As I finished wheezing and looked around for an empty seat, it occurred to me that something had to be done, I needed to whip into shape. So, I decided to take a walk on the wild side and look into this fitness thing.

All it takes is a brief glance at the TV to discover America's love affair with exercise gadgets and diets. You can find a staggering variety of contraptions that promise miracle results to firm those thighs, smooth that tummy or firm that derriere. It appears like the fitness craze of the 80s, that precarious decade in which the phrase "no pain, no gain" was law, has continued well into the 90s.

However, appearances can be deceiving. According to a 1990 National Health Interview Survey completed by the National Center for Health Statistics, overall participation in strenuous activity and exercise declined 10 percent between 1985 and 1990. This figure certainly does not mean that all Americans are idly sitting on their posteriors inhaling fat products, but it does show that the exercise trend is changing.

"No!" You might be shouting. "I see people running like maniacs on campus all the time." Well, to those of you who are straining with this idea right now, I will admit that this was one of my initial reactions, also.

I thought exercise was on the rise among college students. Wrong!

Data shows that exercise is declining for all age groups, spread across broad demographic categories like age, race, income, gender and the like. In addition, jogging is one of the activities that has declined the most.

What is the reason for the decline in exercise? No one knows for sure, but there are several factors that probably contributed. These include the faddish here-today-gone-tomorrow quality of some exercise activities, lack of time because of a busy schedule, crime concerns, funding cutbacks to public sports/exercise institutions and mixed signals from the media regarding the benefits - or detriments - of certain exercises.

So, how fit are you? To find the real answer to this question, we will now engage in a small activity. First, find your pulse by putting a finger on the inside of one of your wrists or on the side of your neck. Then, count the number of beats you feel for 10 seconds. Multiply this number by six, and you have your resting pulse.

OK, Ajs, now for the diagnosis! If your resting pulse was below 40, you're probably a Olympic runner or the like. If it was 40, you're as tight as a trained swimmer. If it was below 60, you're either an athlete or in impeccable shape. If it was between 60 and 80, you are about average. If your resting pulse was higher than 80 ... Well ...

OK! Since most of us are not as fit as we thought we were, I planned ahead and sought advice for us. I talked with Jana Watts, a former student who received her degree in exercise technology and who is now the aerobics coordinator for a local health club. She offered several helpful tips to keep our bodies strong and happy:

• Rest! Although the recommended eight hours of sleep for an active adult is probably seen as an unrealistic luxury to the college student, try to come as close to that figure as you possibly can. Also, try mini-naps in your idle time between classes if you are exhausted.

• Drink at least eight glasses of water a day. Texas heat can get pretty intense, so try to carry water or other fluids with you for that trek to class.

• Stretch your tired muscles often - you can even try little stretches at your desk during class. Little ones, Ajs - not full-blown calisthenics!

• Walk, don't ride, to class when possible and take the stairs.

• Wear good shoes for all that walking you will be doing now.

• Skim the fat out of your diet - easy at that potato bar in Sbisal!

• Chill out. Try to lower your stress level.

Let's face it - exercise is not all fun. It requires work, dedication and most of all, time. As college students, we all lead hectic lives, perhaps even too hectic. Still, 30 minutes three times a week is all that is needed to keep you in top form. Now, is that too much to ask? See y'all in Deware!

Aja Henderson is a sophomore finance major

Appearances do matter in relationships

Unfortunately, looks often change the way people feel

MICHAEL LANDAUER Columnist



Firewater and Yuppie Boy are friends of mine. Firewater is a party girl. My friends and I place bets on how many guys she'll mug with on any given night. She is wild and free. She belongs to the world.

Yuppie boy is quite different. He wears glasses and at least looks like he studies all the time. He worked in a Yuppie store in a wealthy part of Houston and is a hopeless romantic. He's looking for a commitment, but he found Firewater. Their relationship reads like a script for a bad sitcom, but there is an important lesson here.

Firewater was afraid of appearances, and Yuppie Boy did not fit her image. She liked Yuppie Boy, but just couldn't help thinking about other people's impressions. I told her it is human nature to judge people based on appearances and to worry what other people think. But understanding human nature doesn't mean we can exempt ourselves from it.

I also told her not worry about what other people think. She knows him and that is all that's important. Then I told her my story.

A friend of mine, Ashley, who goes to an all-girls school in another state showed my letters to her suite-mate, "Jane". Needless to say Jane was either charmed by my eloquence or extremely bored, so she wrote me a letter. We became pen pals and got to know each other well. After a while we even started working up a large phone bill, and she started talking about coming to

Houston over the summer to visit Ashley and me.

I had sent Jane a picture of myself and was waiting for a picture of her in return. Ashley never told me if Jane was pretty or not. Well, after exchanging three more letters I finally got a picture.

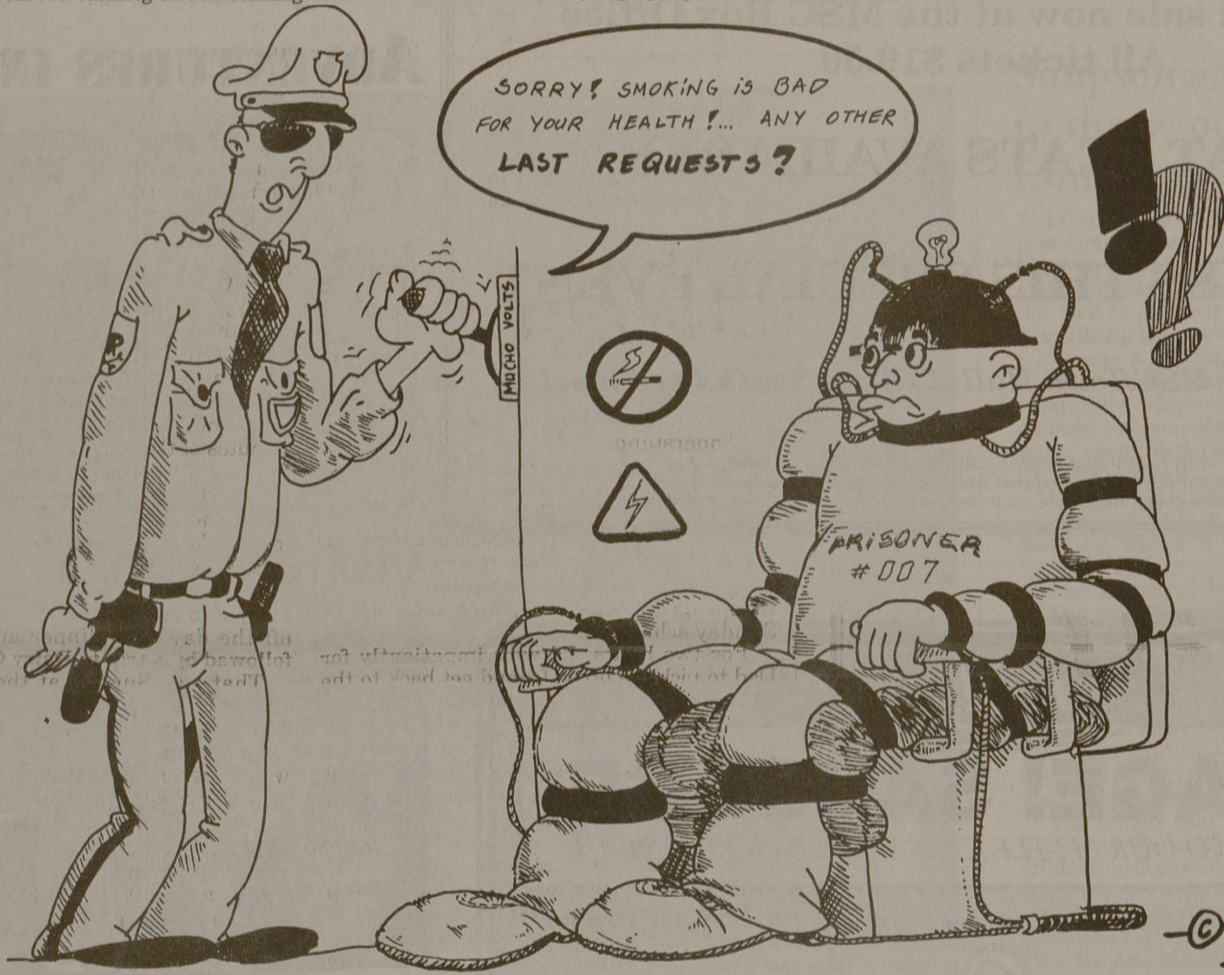
I don't want to use the word ugly. I really don't. But OK, she was ugly. Maybe not to everyone, but she was certainly not my type - my type being a girl who is not physically threatening to me. I was miserable about the way I felt. It was even worse telling Ashley.

We like to think we are too intellectual to judge people by appearance. We link such shallow judgments with our high school days. Unfortunately, life is not like that.

Through this whole experience I formed idealistic views about appearances. People are what they are inside, not outside. It is their personalities, not their appearances on which we should base our opinions on. Jane is a good person. That's all that matters. Yuppie Boy is a great guy and Firewater enjoys his company. What more does she need?

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SHOULD TEXAS PRISONS BAN SMOKING?

Yes —

ERIN HILL Columnist



If Carol Vance, chairman of the board for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice has his way, criminals will leave prison more than rehabilitated. They will leave the prison system free from nicotine addictions as well.

Vance has proposed a total ban on all tobacco products, including cigarettes and chewing tobacco. He says it is his goal to eliminate tobacco, both to rid felons of addictions and to protect prisoners who don't smoke.

"I think this protects everyone from having to smoke other people's smoke," said Vance. Second-hand smoke, as you can imagine, is a real problem in the prisons, where ventilation in cells is poor.

Forcing prisoners to quit smoking may seem harsh and even dangerous, but Vance isn't the first prison administrator to come up with such a plan. Smoking bans have been implemented in other state prison systems in the past.

Closer to home, the Stevenson unit of the Texas prison system in Cuero is already smoke-free. Harris County also implemented a successful ban in their county jail.

"Some of our people took a pretty pessimistic view and were trying to prepare for inmate unrest but there was none," said Captain Don McWilliams of the Harris County Sheriff's Department.

It was actually an exceptionally smooth transition; not a single uprising occurred.

Some may tell that you smoking is one of the few pleasures left for felons to enjoy; taking that away would make prison life intolerable.

It may be one of their few pleasures, besides color television sets, but prison comfort shouldn't be our main concern. They are entitled, certainly, to adequate shelter, clothing, food and water, but prisoners park many of their 'rights' at the door when they are convicted of a crime.

It seems ironic that one of the loudest voices of the opposition to the ban belongs to William Spaulding, a prisoner convicted of rape in two separate counties. He thinks it is unfair to take his cigarettes away.

What is truly unfair is that innocent women suffered at the hands of this violent criminal. He is in no position to gripe.

Yes, the smoking ban may initially cause discomfort for both the prisoners and guards (no special treatment for state employees) who are required to give up their habits, but it will also give them an opportunity to develop self-discipline and control.

While the harmful affects of smoking are debatable, no one can argue that abstinence from tobacco products is bad for one's health. Vance will not be hurting anyone if his proposal is implemented.

The goal to free all prisoners from addictions is a noble one. He is aiming for true rehabilitation. The men and women who leave the prison will be better for giving up their addictive habits.

Erin Hill is a senior English major

No —

AJA HENDERSON Columnist



"I don't think that this should be shoved down any body's throat ... the whole restriction is based on someone's personal opinion." - a sergeant at the Brazos County Jail

Close your eyes for a moment and imagine a prison full of docile, smiling, smoke-free criminals who will emerge fully rehabilitated from all of their evil ways and addictions upon release. Now, open your eyes and face reality. A law banning smoking in the prisons might be construed as a smart political move, but it would only create a legal minefield.

The rationale behind this whole silly mess is that all prisoners should be rid of their addictions upon their release. The key word here is addictions. It is obviously not debatable that smoking is detrimental to one's health, but the scientific community is debating the issue of whether smoking is an addiction and not just a habit. There has been no conclusive evidence that it is an addiction, and there appears to be no scholarly consensus on this question. This makes the entire "addiction" rationale nothing more than an inflated personal opinion.

In addition to the fact that this proposal is based largely on opinion rather than conclusive facts, the constitutional concerns here are enormous.

The Fourteenth Amendment prevents the government from denying citizens equal protection. It could be argued that banning prisoners from smoking violates this equal protection clause. Any law requires the government to justify why it took away a right from a person, or from a group of people in this case. Smoking is certainly not a right that is explicitly stated in our Constitution, but rights deemed fundamental for equal protection disputes are not clear.

Judicial decisions have reached far beyond the ones usually reserved for due process. This precedent paves a way for the argument that smoking is an activity that is legal for the general population, but stripped from the criminal one.

This idea also dissipates the topic of secondhand smoke. Sure, prisoners can sue other prisoners on grounds that they are suffering from the ill effects of secondhand smoke. However, that alone would not be grounds to ban smoking in prisons across the board. The general public is allowed to smoke, and a free person can expose many more people to secondhand smoke than a prisoner, who has highly limited movement.

A smoking ban would face scrutiny in the courts under the Equal Protection clause. The economic implications are staggering, as well. Texas would have to consider highly probable costs from legal challenges, as well as the cost of implementing and maintaining a program to help the prisoners quit smoking.

The true end benefits of a smoking ban in prisons are questionable, the means economically ignorant at best and unconstitutional at worst. A smoking ban is a high-minded idea wrapped in bad plan of action.

Aja Henderson is a sophomore finance major

