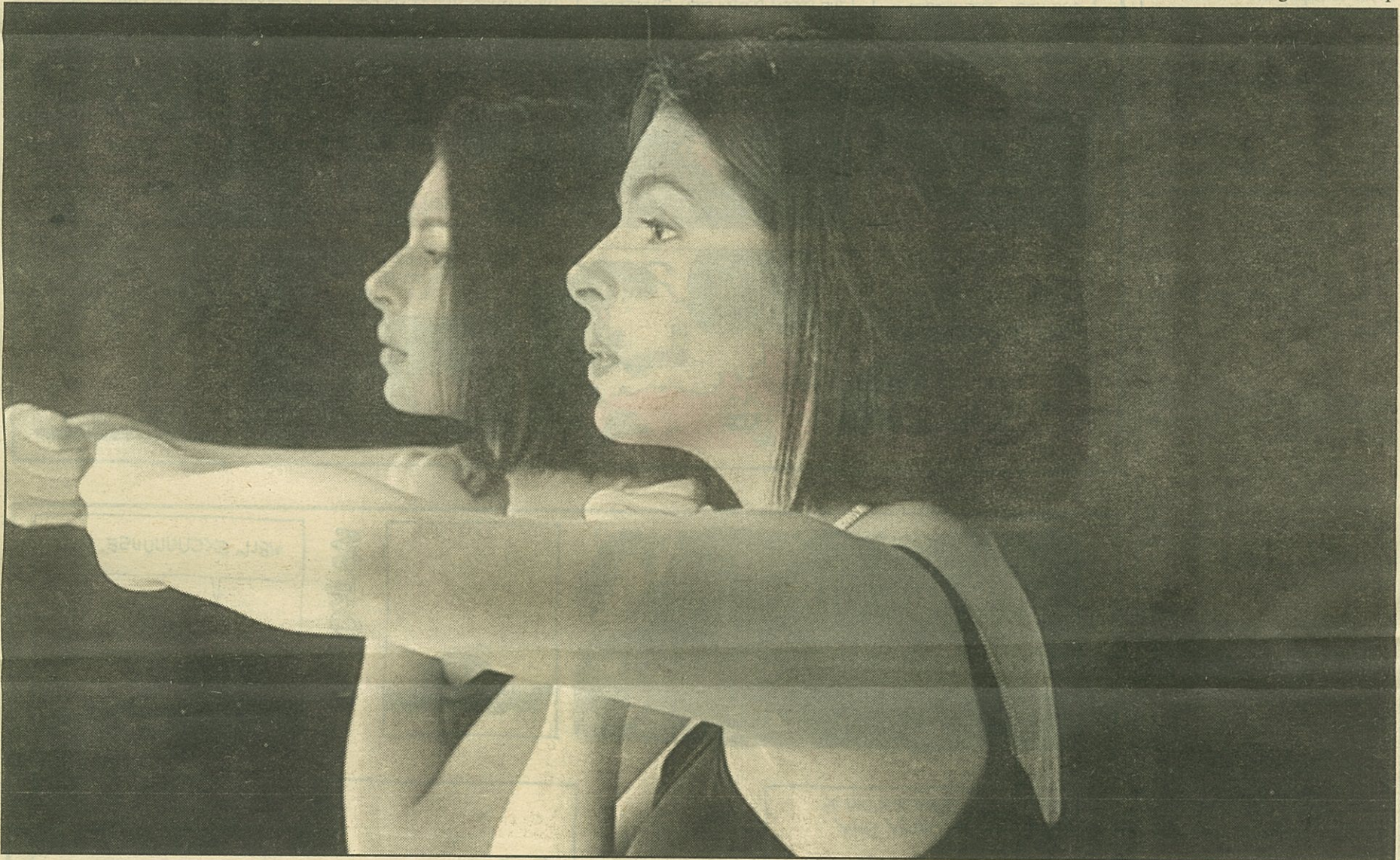




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perfect fit

Change that reflection!



SOCIETY is so intensely and consistently obsessed with weight. The anxiety that women suffer over a tiny bulge in the belly or a dimple in the thigh seems disproportionate in the face of reason.

When women who actually look malnourished voice such concerns — and we've all heard them do so — we're witnessing a tragic phenomenon of this day and age.

As almost none of us are able to live up to these high internalised, unrealistic standards, we start hating ourselves, and end up guilty and depressed. If only we were more restrained, more determined, thinner, people would like and accept us better. The strong implication is that there is nothing worthy about us except the flatness and tautness of our body — as if these are the yardsticks by which our character and loveableness are measured.

Naturally, this often gives rise to psychological disorders, including feelings of insecurity, lack of self-confidence, feelings of inadequacy, and much.

This in turn leads to destructive eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia while damaging one's sense of self-worth.

Obesity — well known and documented, is also the cause of numerous health problems such as coronary heart disease, arthritis, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, some forms of cancer, and much more.

Over the past nine years that I have been a fitness professional, when I've initially met people, I haven't come across a single person who is entirely happy and comfortable with his/her body in the visual sense. The obsession with attaining the ideal figure and maintaining it causes constant trauma and anxiety, playing havoc with one's mind. Some of the most common areas of great concern are the hips, thighs and stomach.

Well you know what — you've been sucking in that stomach for too long. You've been wearing flowing black to cover those hips and thighs too often. Your friends have been calling you fatso or fatty one time too many. You deserve so much better than that.

Change that reflection! And do it now. It's a very attainable goal, and you can do it. As you can well imagine, it'll turn your life around.

Where do I begin?

Start where you stand! The secret of getting ahead is getting started. Start where many good things start — with the will to succeed. It all begins from within you.

Recognise your problem areas and be honest with yourself. Stand in front of a mirror, and take a good hard

look at yourself. Write down what you see and don't like. Don't try and suck that fat in and don't choose the most flattering poses. Just see it all as it is. If you don't acknowledge your problems areas, there's nothing you can do about them.

Time issue

Getting into a routine is undeniably the hardest part. Even when there's motivation, there's always the prob-

lem of time. You have to shove other things aside, and shove exercise into what seems like an already overburdened schedule.

The answer to your list of obstacles is always the same — you have to make it happen. Some strategies could be walking to work, climbing the stairs instead of taking the elevator, exercising during your lunch hour, getting up earlier, stopping off at class on your way home from work or using the time when your kid is napping.

There's no reason why exercise can't be a regular part of your life. Do it for yourself, and do it no matter what.

Goal getting

Make a plan that will focus your efforts. Combining a well balanced diet with regular exercise is the only long-term, effective and safe answer. Written goals will help

you keep track of your progress. This will make your accomplishments more obvious and identify problem areas that require more attention.

Support system

Find someone to lean on. When making changes, even the most beloved friends and family members may feel it is an unnecessary exercise which imposes upon them. If you can identify people who will support you, their encouragement will make it easier for you to stick to your new lifestyle. This nurturing and support will help you stick it out, even during times of stress.

Be realistic

The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. If you have lofty, over-ambitious goals and idealistic expectations of yourself, you'll most likely end up disappointed. We all occasionally miss a class and indulge in a slab of chocolate. Don't be too hard on yourself! If you missed a class, take a walk instead. If you binged earlier in the evening, stick to a smaller, lighter dinner to make up for it. If giving up on mangoes all summer is unthinkable for you, then maybe you could reach a compromise by giving up on chocolates and sweets instead.

Credit yourself

- Notice when:
- People start commenting on how much slimmer you look.
 - Your clothes start fitting better and falling looser.
 - You start seeing muscle definition where earlier there was none. You start feeling more energetic and healthy.
 - You can do three more sets of an exercise than when you started.
 - Credit yourself for the changes you're creating today.

Making it a habit

You will probably turn your new behavioural patterns into lifestyle habits when you realise the full benefit of the direction you're headed in.

Adhering to good lifestyle habits is the key to long-term fat/inch control. Dedication to the same and faith in your abilities is the answer. Quick fixes, on the other hand, are just not.

So go right ahead and make those changes. You'll notice drastic positive effects on your social life, personal life, sex life and career. It'll be well worth the effort!

GOAL GETTING

To help yourself set and reach a fitness goal, fill out the information below. You can make copies of this chart and fill it out every few months to remotivate yourself.

My Goals Are: _____
(Be specific — eg to lose 1-2" in 4 weeks)

I will do the following to achieve the above:
(eg join an aerobic class three times a week).

- 1 _____
- 2 _____

I will stop the following:
(eg eating sweets)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____

I will continue with the following healthy habits:
(eg taking a walk with my friend Yasmin at lunch every Wednesday)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____

My support system includes:
(ie people who will be supportive of me in my new endeavours)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____

My affirmation is: _____
(eg I'm growing stronger and healthier each day)

When I reach my goal of _____
I will reward myself by _____
(eg buying a new watch or outfit)