

Make Mindfulness Your New Year's Resolution!

by the Merrithew Health & Fitness™ Team



MERRITHEW HEALTH & FITNESS™

The buying and wrapping, writing and mailing cards, baking and a myriad of other deadlines surrounding the holidays is stressful and can lead us into a state of constant frenzy! The New Year is the right time to renew ones' self especially if you've overindulged a bit and need to re-establish structure in your life or perhaps even change your routine. Implementing a pattern of mindfulness-based practices in everything you do is the perfect way to get back on track with your overall well-being.

Make Mindfulness Your New Year's Resolution!

Mindfulness means being present and being aware of your body, the benefits of which are supported by scientific research. Here's how to get started:

- Take notice of your surroundings and enjoy what makes you feel good.
- Be present; listen to what other people are saying not what you think they are saying or what you want to say next.
- Notice your body and take time to look after it. Take note of what you are consuming and know that everything you take into your body can have an affect on how you feel both physically and emotionally.
- Most of all take time to breathe and get to know you both inside and out.

Breath Awareness

At the heart of mindfulness and mindful movement is the importance of breath awareness. Breathing regulates all the systems of the body and is a stress reducer for the nervous system. The entire respiratory system affects our body physically, emotionally and cognitively. Breathing practice can increase our metabolic rate and creates more inner awareness both physically and mentally.

Movement Awareness

Focusing on and being aware of your movement educates and focuses the mind on what the body is doing, how it operates and the quality of the movement. Research has shown that what you program in your mind will have an affect on how well you function physically and mentally.

When moving with awareness and purpose, you create a closer connection to ones' whole self. The type of exercise does not necessarily need to be a mind/body program such as yoga, STOTT PILATES® or ZEN•GA™. Any approach to movement, for example CORE™ Athletic Conditioning & Performance Training™, weight training or running, done with a mindful approach will improve the desired results considerably.

Mindful movement fitness programs such as ZEN•GA promote mind-body awareness. Comparisons are suggested in order to fully understand the impact of the mind-body connection and to increase motivation. For example, complete an exercise on one side of the

body then take the time to stop and notice how it feels. Usually you will feel freer, more mobile, relaxed on that first side, or invigorated, making you want to achieve the same result on the other side.

Mindfulness and Injury Prevention

Being mindful during any movement not only assists with self-motivation, but can also prevent injury. When walking to the subway or work, stop, take-notice, be aware of yourself physically and mentally. Am I breathing easily or am I tense? Are my shoes comfortable or are they affecting the way I walk? The bag hanging off one shoulder or the backpack, how much is in there that really needs to be? Be aware and then use the awareness as a prompt to make a change, lighten the load, organize and clean out your backpack or purse. Be proactive, take action instead of repeating the same pattern over and over again which can lead to tension, pain, and eventual injury.

Mindfulness means being present and being aware of your body. Current research is now promoting not only training of the neuro-muscular and skeletal system but also the fascial system which encompasses our entire body like a stocking and can cause restrictions, injuries and prevent healthy physical conditioning. If over-worked or over-stretched, the fascia will lose its hydrated quality causing tense and restricted movements.

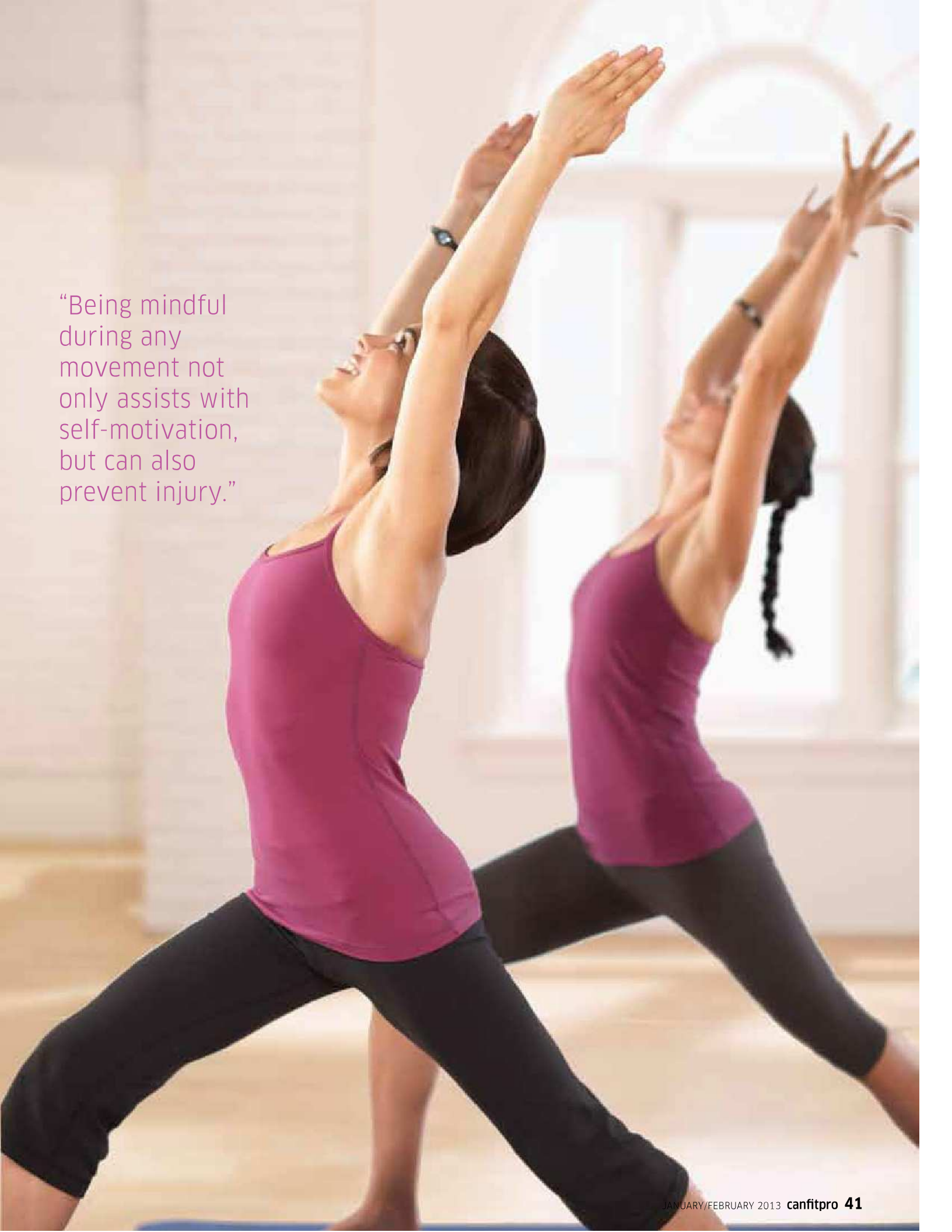
For instance, when you are feeling elastic or spring-like in your movement continue on; however, when you start to feel a stiffness or heaviness stop, slow down, re-hydrate, bring down the intensity until you are able to re-establish that same spring-like ease or bounce in your movement. Listen to your body and adjust accordingly. Continuing on at the same pace can lead to overuse and injury.

A Mindful Approach to Food

Lastly, mindfulness in what you eat can be a major contributor in the battle to a healthier body and mind. Take time and be cognizant of when and what you are eating. Think about the quality of your food and the speed at which you are eating. Standing and eating as you multi-task is a sure way to not notice how much you have consumed, how quickly you consumed it, whether you enjoyed it or to even notice you are full.

In order to make any changes we must be aware of the "here and now" and the patterns we have established both physically and mentally. Mindfulness helps us to become more connected with ourselves and to find ways to make positive changes in our lives. There are many ways to learn how to become more mindful. Breathing classes, exercise classes being taught with a mindful approach, and meditation are just a few examples of how to get started.

By paying attention to these small details and in essence joining what we call "the Mindful Movement" you'll see yourself become happier, healthier and able to live more in the moment! Make mindfulness your New Year's Resolution.

A photograph of two women in a yoga studio performing a warrior II pose. They are wearing maroon tank tops and black leggings. Their arms are raised high, and they are looking upwards. The background features a large window with a decorative arch. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting a daytime setting. The overall mood is serene and focused.

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