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Fitness resolutions? These folks don't need them

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By Jack Kelly, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

If you're like most Americans, you've made a New Year's resolution to eat more healthfully and exercise more. And if you're like 80 percent of those who make such resolutions, you'll break them, probably before the end of this month.



Chiropractor Raymond Vactor follows a routine of yoga, meditation and small meals to stay in shape.

And then there are those who don't make fitness resolutions because they don't need them.

That's a group that includes Dr. Raymond Vactor, a chiropractor in Wexford; Andrea Labishak, a pharmaceutical representative for Takeda Pharmaceuticals; Eric Hodos, an information technology project manager for Mellon Financial Corp., and Debbie Marasco, a financial analyst for Mellon.

They don't need resolutions because they long ago incorporated proper diet and exercise into their lifestyles. All eat sensibly and exercise almost every day, getting a balance of cardiovascular, resistance and flexibility training.

The key to success, they say, is to make exercise and healthy eating their regular routine, not a departure from it.

Like father, like son

Dr. Vactor is 52, 5 feet, 9 inches tall and 160 pounds. He's had a profound interest in health and fitness since the age of 9, when his older sister Nancy died after a long illness.

"She suffered a lot, and the doctors were never able to pinpoint exactly what was wrong with her," he explained. "After that, my father became kind of a health fanatic."

Young Ray gained from his dad a passion for healthy eating, and was active in sports -- football and skiing in particular.

He played fullback for Churchill High School. A back injury his junior year led to his introduction to chiropractic medicine.

"I couldn't straighten up. My dad took me to a chiropractor. He really helped me out."

After graduating from high school in 1971, Dr. Vactor sold ski equipment, but later entered chiropractic college. He opened his practice in 1989.

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Ray Vactor has been practicing yoga since age 20, and it forms the basis of his daily exercise routine.

"Every morning and every evening I do 15 minutes of stretching exercises, followed by 15 minutes of meditation," he said.

Despite work days that typically begin at 7:30 a.m. and often don't end until 8 p.m., Dr. Vactor does intense yoga sessions three to four times a week, and gets to the gym three times a week. He remains an avid skier, and in the summer bicycles 30-40 miles a week.

Dr. Vactor eats frequent small meals, more heavily in the morning, lightly at night.

"Night is the worst time to eat, because your body is shutting down," he said. "Eating at night makes your body work harder, wears it out sooner. And that's when most people put their weight on, eating heavy at night."

Dr. Vactor eats no red meat, and drinks no hard liquor. "Very occasionally" he will have a glass of wine.

A typical day's menu would be whole grain cereal with fruit for breakfast, a power bar for a mid-morning snack, a tuna sandwich on whole wheat for lunch, and a salad or yogurt for dinner.