

From the Offices of Phil Kaplan
Be Better Solutions Headquarters
1304 SW 160th Ave., #337
Sunrise, Florida 33326

Originally Written May 12, 2008

It's time for a new recognition of the potential we have to steer our futures, control our physical destinies, and to prepare for the journey we each have the potential to enjoy. The journey can take on a new life in this very moment, and it begins by questioning imposed limitations and exploring the question, "*what level of excellence is each one of us really capable of?*"

In the past 10 years I've had the privilege of coming to know people who wished for years their diet programs "worked," only to come to understand the approach they were using was flawed. With a new understanding, deprivation was replaced with supportive eating, frustration was replaced by strategic result-oriented exercise, and the long struggle with weight loss was replaced by a new sense of power and ease. In that same period of time I've come to know people who felt old beyond their years until they understood the power they had over their bodies' ability to recreate itself . . . into a new biologically younger version.

The information overwhelm that afflicts the 21st century's over-burdened, over-fat, over-indulged, over-stressed population has created a vacuum in which sensibilities are replaced by false promises (lose weight without exercise) and common sense has become non-sense, especially in the realm of health and fitness.

Whether you've found physical improvement in the past, or whether you're presently struggling with the demons of previous attempts at fitness labeled as a string of failures, I aim to shake things up, to stir up new questions and to follow with new answers. I aim to reacquaint you with the ability you have to facilitate change. I aim to hand you your power so you never find yourself wishing without a clear plan of action, and you never embark upon a plan of action without enjoying the outcome. With a recognition of the potential and power you possess but might not yet have learned to unleash, a modification in actions and habits can take you to "Thrill Moments" you never dreamed of. This is the first of *Seven Letters*, a series of letters I hope will empower you to abandon any thoughts that suggest you're past your prime.

If you have an open mind, if you're willing to trust that I have some expertise that can positively impact your life, and if you're willing to at least consider new possibility, then we begin by looking beyond "the but" and re-evaluating what we really want.

I welcome you to a new starting point, a point from which you'll learn to overcome weight loss resistance, a point from which you'll understand how and why a 6-minute exercise regimen might be the fat burning solutions you've always sought after, and a point from which you realize . . . you absolutely can pursue a state of being healthy and fit without any fear of failure.

Sincerely,
Phil Kaplan

Fitness Professionals: This is being sent to everyone registered for my General Fitness information newsletter. If you are not registered as a Fitness Professional, complete the info and check the Fitness Professionals box at <http://philkaplan.com/registrationform.htm>.

Seven Letters

Letter #1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Beyond the But3

Be Better4

We want to wake up feeling capable, energized, and excited about the day5

We want to go to bed regret-free6

We want to feel confidence, self-esteem, and well-being7

We want to be free of or we want to know we're in charge of dis-ease.....8

Inflammation10

Environmental Toxins11

Meds, Meds, Meds.....11

What to Expect.....12

Finally . . . Abs, Glutes, Delts, and Thighs13

Note that each of the Seven Letters Will Have Its Own Table of Contents.
 Letters (and Contents) Will Be Consolidated into a Book When All Seven Have Been Distributed.

Beyond the But . . .

Masterful bodybuilders have learned to use chemical compounds and dehydration techniques to appear as flawless images of refined sculpted muscle on the stage. The shows and magazines surrounding the sports use the words "fit" and "fitness," but fitness in an aesthetic muscular realm is a skewed perception to non-competitors.

As a long-time fitness professional and health club operator, I've learned that real goals often follow "the but."

"I don't want to look like a bodybuilder but . . ."

The beginnings of the admission of the actual goal follow.

". . . I'd like to build my arms a bit," or ". . . I'd love to have a six-pack."

Bodybuilding is an extreme pursuit, and at high competitive levels it has little to do with health or fitness. I wonder whether the qualification (the "but") is a way of letting me know they don't want to commit all of their available time, energy, and waking hours to the gym, or whether it's based on a mistaken belief that "the gym makes you big." Either way, there's a sort of apologetic tone to it, sounding almost like an "excuse" for not being in great shape.

"I don't want to run a marathon but . . . I'd like to have more energy," either means, *"I don't want you to push me so hard my legs ache, but I want an outcome,"* or, on a deeper level, *"I have all of the aerobic capacity of a chair and I apologize for not being as athletic as society would like me to be."*

Either way, there's a subtle need being revealed by the "but."

The need is a redefinition of the terms "fit" and "healthy."

I'd like to attempt a definition of "fit and healthy" that signifies, *"the outcome almost everyone wants when they undertake or refine an exercise regimen."*

That doesn't mean "fit and healthy" is the ONLY desired outcome, but it does accurately suggest that if you're exercising and neglecting the pursuit of health and fitness, you're cheating yourself out of an immensely rewarding and much deserved payoff.



Be Better

I'm going to invest some time in providing you information aimed at your betterment, so in order to ensure the connection between my words and your outcome begins now . . . let's get really clear on what we're referring to when we throw these two words (*fit* and *healthy*) around.



Let's find agreement that the outcome I'm about to express is in fact that which we seek, the outcome that underlies great abs, nice glutes, and an ideal weight.

Let's look beyond the knee-jerk "*I want to get in shape,*" beyond the "*I wish I looked like the celeb on the magazine cover,*" beyond the "*if it came in a bottle,*" and let's agree upon what we, people living their lives in a world filled with challenges, joys, obstacles, and the accepted rules of aging, really want.

I'll start with the obvious . . .

We want to like the way we look.

Critics will tell me appearance has nothing to do with fitness. They'll tell me it's more important to love the body you're in than to seek out change. After 25 years and thousands of clients I'd respectfully disagree.

"Fitness" has a social component, a "fit-in" element, and if any individual feels his or her reflection limits potential, limits opportunity, or causes negative emotions, fitness is going to remain elusive. It's OK to want to look good.

That doesn't mean I take issue with "love the body you're in" thinking, but I'd strongly assert that loving the body you're in need not block the possibility of positive change. It's confining to believe, "*I'll be happy when my waist is as it was in college*" if you're wearing belts four sizes bigger, but it's liberating to accept the present and know you'll find greater thrill as your waist reduces. Love today, seek betterment tomorrow, and your immediate world brings you immeasurable joy.



In case it didn't click the first time, I'll make it a bit stronger.

It's good to want to look good!

We want to wake up feeling capable, energized, and excited about the day

I've learned to ask people, in the assessment process, how they feel upon waking. At first I was amazed by how rarely the responses were positive.

The descriptions often use the words *ache*, *sluggish*, *hate*, *dread*, and the all-too-common phrase, "*hit by a Mack truck*."

There's an apparent momentary love for the pillow, an overwhelming desire to return to a state of unconsciousness, and a sense of disgust aimed at the clock making the buzzing sound.



Why do I equate an impulse that says, "*kill the alarm clock*" with an absence of health and fitness? I create that association because the alarm clock is innocent of any wrong doing. What good is striving for the pecs of a champion if you're not even excited about welcoming the sunrise?

When the alarm clock wakes the proverbial Mack truck victim, rather than feeling healthy and fit enough to embrace a new day, the overriding emotion says, "*not yet*," suggesting more time lying in an unconscious state is superior to using the muscles and mind you were given to produce, to enjoy, and to expand.

Barring those times in our lives where we go through unpleasant circumstance, each waking moment offers new opportunity to grow, to do, to share, and to love.

Just as I've learned to inquire as to the waking state in the initial assessment, I've learned to include a similar question in my follow up assessments, and by anecdote I've found . . . when people feel fit, they feel good about themselves, and when their bodies are equipped to healthfully perform in whatever the day demands, they embrace every new day.

Show me someone who greets the morning with positive anticipation and I'll show you someone who understands the concept of being healthy and fit.



We want to go to bed regret-free



Imagine, if you haven't ever been there, having a five-year-old grandchild run toward you, jump into your arms, and almost knock you off your feet. Imagine the mix of joy and terror. Imagine the fear when play turns into risk.

The fear is compounded by frustration when the drive home comes with familiar back spasm, joint pain, and a wish that you were younger.

Imagine, if you haven't ever been there, popping the button on your pants in public. No, your pants won't fall down, but it sends a very loud message internally, one that goes beyond blaming the pant manufacturer.

Imagine, if you haven't ever been there, feeling self-conscious about going to a pool, beach, or a summer picnic, because you don't want to be seen in appropriately minimal clothing.

These examples of uncomfortable incidents share an emotional bond. They come with a sense of "I wish I'd . . ."

"I wish I'd followed the advice of the physical therapist."

"I wish I'd stayed on my diet."

"I wish I'd stuck to my walking program."

The "wish-ayed" gets into the thinking part of your brain, and as you lie in bed waiting for sleep to come, it magnifies the experience(s) and has you immersed in a sense of regret.

Amazingly, when the "wish-ayed" is challenged by a new commitment, a sense of "yes I'm improving," evidence of physical betterment, the regrets not only diminish, they evaporate!



We want to feel confidence, self-esteem, and well-being

Sometimes the circumstances aren't as in-your-face as the button popping, and externally you appear to be just fine, but if you question your ability, if you question your sense of belonging in a given group or environment, or if you feel somehow less than adequate in a social, romantic, or performance situation, the discomfort can outweigh any potential pleasure. The endocrine system reacts to an internal emotional stress and amplifies not only the sense of discomfort, but also the residual challenge. In this example, subtle stress takes on a snowball effect which leads to a heightened sense of disease.



When feelings of doubt or inadequacy are replaced by feelings of health and fitness, confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of wellness turn challenges into fun, and emotions increase circulation of "feel-good" chemicals in the brain sending out "betterment" signals to the entire body.

At this point you may be asking the valid question:

"What is the guy talking about? He's halfway through an article on fitness and he hasn't promised me six-pack abs or lean sexy thighs?!?!?!?"

Hey, if six-pack abs (more accurately eight pack abs) are going to make you like the way you look and have you approach the world with confidence, well-being, and self-esteem, then you deserve them and should pursue them, but I've met too many obsessed and unhappy fitness competitors to believe the view from outside is enough. I've known too many people with model-physiques living lives void of rewarding relationships, positive adventure, and joy to direct anyone to pursue abs at the expense of the outcomes I listed above. I will get to the keys to leanness, to finding a body that commands respect and admiration, but not before I complete my quest, not before I fully address, "what people really want." You can question my thinking, you can wonder whether I'm drinking weird Kool-Aid, and you can insist you having great abs supersedes the importance of world peace. All I ask is that you bear with me, allow me to complete the expression of a new perspective, and that you hold judgment until you have completed this letter (and the six that follow).

This new perspective has allowed me to far better connect with people seeking positive change, and to provide them with the balanced life-altering information they needed to begin a process of ongoing betterment, a process that may lead to great abs, or might simply lead to a blissful admiration of the body that can run at will, fits comfortably into stylish clothing, and welcomes mirrors.

If we add empowerment, a sense of our own potential, and a sense of achievement to our list of wants it's almost complete. There is one more.

We want to be free of or we want to know we're in charge of dis-ease

To me, this is the biggie, and it is a topic and a concept that will underlie much of what I choose to professionally pursue throughout the decade to come. I know, absolutely know, that a strategic commitment to exercise and supportive eating can cure disease. Until now that's been taboo. Personal trainers weren't allowed to claim to "cure" anything. They were prescribers of exercise programs, or workout guides. I've learned a lot in the last quarter century.

Before I move on with my perhaps arrogant claim of curing disease, I'd like to define my use of the words "cure" and "disease."

Cure, according to Webster, means "restore to health." In my fitness facilities, my circle of friendships, and my various vehicles for reaching the public, I've helped fat people get lean, I've helped old people get young, I've helped skinny people become muscular, and I've helped fatigue-ridden folks find new energy.

An over-fat body, a body victim to the oxidative process we've come to associate with aging, a body slight in muscle tissue, and a low level of energy may not be typical examples of what medicine has taught us to recognize as *disease*, but if we throw a hyphen in the word, and define "dis-ease" as the absence of ease, aren't those compromising traits I described issues that remove "ease of life" to some significant degree?



If I, or any fitness professional, can help these people find new invigoration, aren't we in fact restoring people to health and bringing them to a new sense of ease?

At this point you may consider that I'm stretching by considering "fatigue" a disease, but stay with me.

When we consider diagnosed diseases, i.e. metabolic syndrome, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, diabetes, and hypothyroidism, it's important to recognize that these "accepted" or "conventional" diseases exist in each individual case on a continuum.

While someone may have been diagnosed with "type II diabetes" at the age of 39, its likely dietary habits began blood sugar fluctuations at the age of 19. Pancreatic dysfunctions might have begun as early as 24. The continuum escalated gradually until a blood test at a routine checkup showed high glucose levels. Rather than considering that the onset of the disease it should simply be recognized as the point in the continuum where it was identified. While at times medical intervention may be a must, in many, and I believe the great majority of cases, the condition was not only preventable, it is reversible. If the dis-ease "grew" over 20 years, the point in time when the condition was diagnosed can be thought of as the peak, and proactive shifts in movement, lifestyle habits, and nutrition, may eliminate the disease completely, without need for ongoing meds or treatment.

I can use similar examples of escalation with diet-induced thyroid issues, lifestyle induced fat accumulation, diet and lifestyle induced reductions in arterial blood flow leading to escalations in blood pressure, and high VLDL cholesterol levels as a result of misinformation and poor adherence to exercise. These are all outcomes that are both preventable and reversible, and conventional medicine fails to "prescribe" proactive treatments that allow the individual to manage his or her own health and fitness.



This extends to arthritis, low back pain, postural weakness, balance challenges, and based on recent groundbreaking research, may very well lend itself to prevention of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other feared and perhaps unnecessarily crippling neurological disorders.

We've also become too well-acquainted with the term "metabolic syndrome." It's been officially categorized as a disease which now opens doors for pharmaceutical research to lead us to new drug offerings that may mask or control symptoms without addressing cause. The links between the symptoms of metabolic syndrome and risk of heart attack are too

striking to ignore. Why seek a course of halting acceleration of risk with medication when exercise and nutritional changes might reverse risk as an individual finds the restoration of health and fitness.

This stands, not only as a new and refreshing perspective on fitness and health, but also as the opening of a new door, a door that allows you to be a part of your own allied health team, inviting nutrition experts, exercise experts, and diagnosticians to provide keys to giving you complete control over your own physical, mental, and emotional well being.

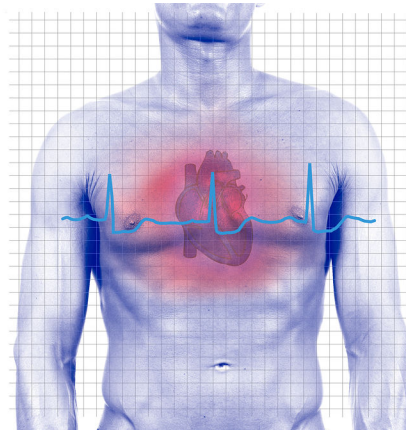
Let's explore and understand a few elements that relate to health and fitness but have been under-understood and merit new exploration.

Inflammation

We're familiar with the term. We know when we slam our finger in a car door (oooowwwch!!!) it becomes inflamed, as does a jammed toe, a skin puncture, or an infected area (i.e. gums, tonsils, etc.). We've been taught to seek out over-the-counter anti-inflammatories and with time most such inflammation diminishes. That leads our drug-buying population to think of inflammation as minor inconvenience that begs for a few dosages of the favorite or most available pain-reliever.

You have your immune system to thank for the swelling, redness, and heat we've come to know as inflammation, as these abnormalities are the result of armies of white blood cells and protective toxin-fighting cytokines arriving to declare war upon foreign invaders.

As we are exposed to bacteria, biotoxins, chemical compounds, processed foods, hydrogenated fats, and over-prescription of medications, we run the risk of disrupting our immune function and stimulating internal unrecognized inflammation. Scientists since the turn of this century have evidenced that many if not all of the "dis-eases" we come to fear are the direct or indirect result of inflammation. These range from irritable bowel syndrome and digestive disorders to arthritis, brain and neurological disorders, heart disease, and cancer.



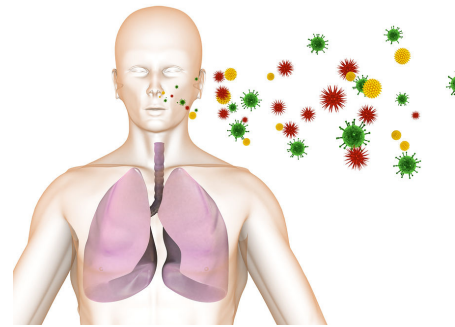
You may be surprised to find that fat accumulation is linked to an inflammatory process, one which redirects the programming of fat cells, primarily in the abdominal region, to swell and promote the accumulation of more adiposity.

Here's the exciting part. The inflammation rarely occurs in a moment. It happens over time, and if we become adept at recognizing the onset of dis-ease, simple exercise and nutritional interventions can reverse it completely, ultimately curing disease and restoring a body from 'inflamed and diseased' to "fit and healthy."

I will address specific strategies for reversing the dis-ease process and simultaneously reducing body fat within the six letters that follow (remember, this is only Letter #1 or Seven Letters).

Environmental Toxins

I don't want to scare you here, nor do I want to be accused of being a conspiracy theorist, so I won't tell you what I've learned about environmental toxins and the debilitating neurological effects that can initiate. If you do opt to learn more about what's in the air you breathe, the water you drink, the building(s) you live or work in, the household products you possess, and the industries you may come in pass-by contact with, visit www.epa.com and begin to explore.



I've had intimate experiences with toxins, and believe there are tens of thousands who might have been misdiagnosed with autoimmune diseases including but not limited to Parkinson's and Multiple Sclerosis because of the chemical toxicity our standard medical system has not found comfort in testing for. It reveals a hole in our medical system, a system that has now become a game of diagnose and medicate.

Meds, Meds, Meds

I often have to turn the page over and keep writing when a new client begins the list of prescribed medications he or she takes regularly. Interestingly, the blood pressure medication was prescribed by the cardiologist, the antibiotic is prescribed by the dermatologist, the thyroid medication and glucose controller are prescribed by the endocrinologist, and the inhaler is prescribed by the pulmonologist. Add in prescriptions for anti-depressants, antacids, and anti-inflammatories and we're looking at a series of conditions that have never been explored holistically. Rather than questioning why the skin eruptions occurred, rather than wondering why sudden mood changes occur, and rather than trying to figure out what might have caused the hypertension, the symptoms are suppressed with a plethora of medications. The doctors prescribe, the drug companies prosper, and the patient swallows pills until the next symptom emerges.

Focus on well-being in the 21st century requires responsibility and willingness to manage your own journey to "fit and healthy." While it isn't necessary right now to expand on the impact of toxins, it is important to restate the thread that runs through this piece.

The things that go into your mouth, the sweat that comes out of your body, the regular excretion of waste, and the stimulation you provide for your respiratory and circulatory systems are both protective and curative for the dis-eases we inadvertently create by thoughtlessly eating, breathing, and indulging.

Simple translation: eating right and exercising strategically minimizes toxic risk and cleanses a toxic system in order to restore health.

What to Expect

In the six letters that follow, I'll get specific.

- I'll share exercise strategies that are so simple and powerful they'll almost instantly be instilled as new habits with dramatic outcomes.
- I'll help you better understand the emotional and physical interpretations of stress and you can use that understanding to enjoy tranquility and healthy.
- I'll share some of the disconcerting realities of the drugs being prescribed with little control and the risks we are programmed to ignore.
- I'll shock you with some realities related to food processing and the impact of sugar.
- I'll teach you how to make food choices that protect you from disease, reduce inflammation, fill you with energy, and put you back in touch with the good feelings you deserve when you stand before the mirror.
- I'll teach you how to master the synergistic relationship between the right nutrition, aerobic exercise, and body composition, and I'll share empowering insight into the science of recuperation.

Why am I doing this? I'm investing the time and energy for one reason; because you need to know.

If you've followed my career at all over the past 25 years, you know of my passion and burning desire to help people find health and fitness. Perhaps you know of the track record I've chalked up for helping people trade their bodies for new ones. Perhaps you know of my battles against fitness fraud and deceit, and my commitment to share the Fitness Truth.

I've learned a great deal, and have developed a skill for communicating complex ideas in simple terms. I feel a responsibility to share what I've learned, and believe it's time to give people the power to gain control over their own bodies once and for all.

And now . . . on to the topic many of you were waiting for . . .

Finally . . . Abs, Glutes, Delts, and Thighs

“A great body,” from an aesthetic standpoint, can be a vital part of “fit and healthy,” assuming it’s achieved keeping all other “wants” in mind. Radical dietary shifts resulting in deprivation are NOT going to lead to fitness and health. Extreme exercise taxing connective tissue, increasing free radical damage, and resulting in an obsessive focus at the expense of family, social, or balance concerns is NOT going to lead to fitness and health.

Here’s the best news of all. If you begin to adopt some new habits, if you’re willing to challenge your muscles for modest 20 – 30 minute bouts a few times per week, if you’re willing to exercise aerobically for 12 minutes in the morning on select days, and if you’re willing to trade poor nutritional choices for delicious and empowering foods that bring not only your taste buds new pleasure, but coax your body into fat release, the benefits roll over into the aesthetic so great abs, great glutes, cellulite-free thighs, and an admirable physique are welcome side effects. Get the approach right and the destination becomes simple.



People fail to get “great abs” often because they focus on “working abs” without recognizing the aesthetic benefit of exercising the body as a whole and minimizing inflammation, recoding the communication between the endocrine system and fat cells.

If you’re 20 years old and lean, a multitude of abs exercises can do the trick, but if you’re 38 with a layer of fat between abs and skin, a simple integrative approach allows the abdominal definition to surface. Ditto for glutes and thighs. Learn to put the body in a state where it functions optimally, rids itself of toxins, eliminates waste effectively, and optimally uses nutrients, and the mirror notices big time.

In the six letters that follow, I’ll do as I promised. I’ll lay out the specifics, provide clear direction backed by sound research, and if all goes as planned, I’ll empower a few thousand people to regain control over their own bodies . . . to acquaint or reacquaint themselves with the all-too-elusive traits of FITNESS and HEALTH!

* * *

Find more information at www.philkaplan.com