

what the health

THE LATEST BUZZ ON FITNESS, NUTRITION, AND WELLNESS SPRING 2012

OLD-SCHOOL STYLE

GEAR UP IN THESE
RETRO FITNESS LOOKS
PG 33



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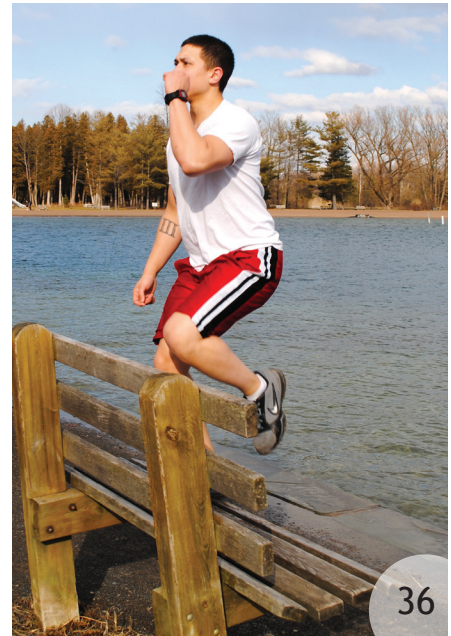
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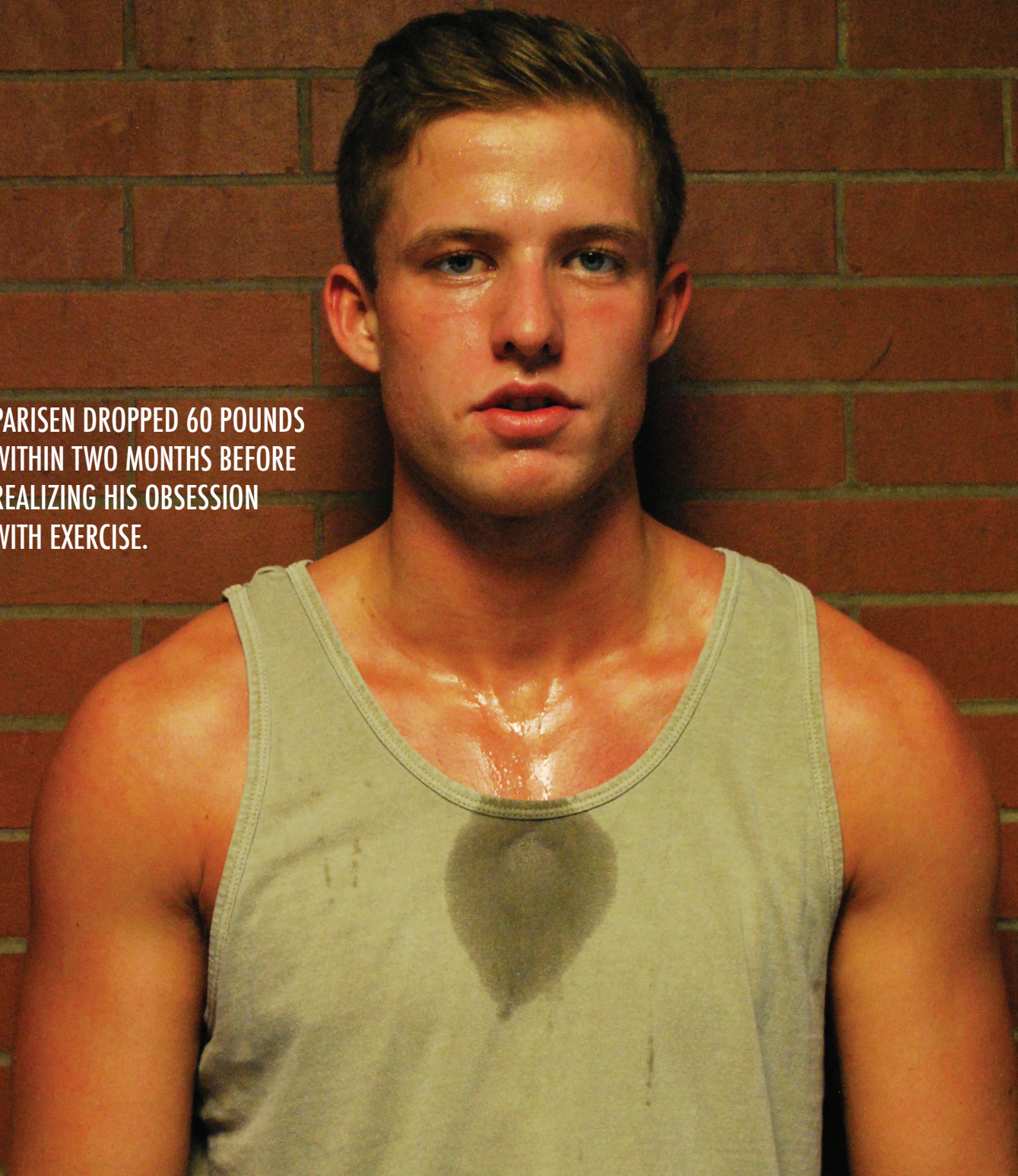
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EXERCISE ADDICTION

story by jordan clifford // photography by yelena galstyan

PARISEN DROPPED 60 POUNDS
WITHIN TWO MONTHS BEFORE
REALIZING HIS OBSESSION
WITH EXERCISE.



It all began with a knee injury during her sophomore year soccer season at Hobart-Williams Smith College. The required rest for rehab left Tiffany Jones out of shape and displeased with her level of performance. She returned to the field and her regular training schedule during her junior year, lost the extra weight, and began to feel and look better. The improvements pleased her, but she wanted more. “It was something completely in my control,” Jones says. She did it for the natural endorphin rush, but before she knew it, it became a compulsion. Jones began counting her calories, weighing herself multiple times a day, working out at the gym, and lifting weights after games. She lied to her friends and would work out instead of spending time with them or going out.

Jones continued this routine through the spring semester and into the following summer. Her performance on the field improved, as did her body image and attitude, until she finally hit a dead end. “I wanted to do things but my body just couldn’t do it,” Jones explains. Overworked, Jones lacked the calories needed to sustain herself over extended workouts. She became victim to an exercise addiction that took over her life.

Exercise addiction is defined as a condition in which an individual exercises excessively, often to the detriment of his or her physical and psychological health and well-being. It’s accompanied by symptoms of stress fractures, depression, and amenorrhea (absence of a menstrual period), and noted by signs such as rigid routines, increase in exercise over time, and fixation on weight loss. It most often affects athletes or habitual exercisers, but not always. There aren’t many definitive statistics regarding this disorder because it’s not defined by the DSM-IV, a diagnostic and statistics manual used by clinical psychologists to diagnose cognitive and behavioral disorders. However, according to Jeffrey Pauline, a sport psychology consultant and assistant

professor in the Department of Sport Management at Syracuse University, the area of exercise and health psychology as a whole has boomed over the last 10 years, though, especially in terms of research.

Ethan Parisen, a senior finance and marketing major at SU says that in a way, he’s addicted to exercise, but believes it’s a healthy addiction. “I use it as a way to keep my life in balance.” Parisen began a rigorous exercise routine his junior year of high school after jokingly being called a fat ass. “It kind of struck a nerve with me,” Parisen says. Standing 6-feet tall and weighing 230 pounds, his initial goal was weight loss, but toward

specializes in addiction, explains that a large part of the nature of addiction is the neuro-chemical component, which for exercise is the rush of endorphins often known as “runner’s high.” Addictions are based in biology and are essentially a physiologic phenomenon, explains Scholl.

Diagnosing exercise addiction is difficult because it is not inherently unhealthy, like drugs or alcohol. “If you ask someone about exercise, their indication is that exercise is good,” Pauline says. Therefore, identifying exercise addiction can be difficult because the person suffering only sees it as positive activity.

“ WHAT STARTED AS A FAT-KID JOKE ENDED WHEN PARISEN LOOKED IN THE MIRROR AND SAW A SKINNY, PALE, SICKLY FIGURE. ”

the end of high school his exercising was out of control. He ran in the morning before school, went to the gym after school, and did extra pushups in the break room at work. He dropped from 230 to 170 pounds in two months.

What started as a fat-kid joke ended when Parisen looked in the mirror and saw a skinny, pale, and sickly figure. “I was like ‘Oh my God, what am I doing to myself?’” Today Parisen continues to workout, but at a healthier pace. He does the same exercise routine everyday for an hour and a half exactly six days a week, seven if he can. He runs for 30 minutes, then works every muscle group in his body. He says he uses the gym as a form of therapy. “It’s the one place where I know exactly what’s going to happen and I can set some level of control over my life,” Parisen says. While he knows that taking a day or two off won’t change his body, he still struggles against the urge to go anyway.

Susan Scholl, a professor in the Department of Public Health, Food Studies and Nutrition at SU who

Tiffany Jones, now a sport psychology consultant and president of X-Factor Performance Consulting, realized her addiction senior year, but didn’t want any help. It took graduate school and a change in location for her to realize how intruding the addiction actually was. “It came down to what was more important—my grad school studies, or my obsession with exercise,” Jones says. “When I started my graduate work and counseling classes, I had to really self-reflect and know my true self,” Jones says.

Now, 12 years later, exercise is no longer controlling her life. “The difference is if I miss a workout, I am not freaking out as much,” Jones says.

Exercise addiction occurs unexpectedly, one day you are working out to get fit and in a couple of months you’re spending more time at the gym than with your friends. Keeping a realistic perspective on weight loss, and knowing how much activity your body can reasonably handle, are keys to managing a compulsion to exercise. **WTH**



EXERCISE ADDICTION CAN SNEAK UP ON YOU. THIS QUIZ FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AT NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY IN THE U.K. CAN HELP YOU DETERMINE IF YOU HAVE A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH EXERCISE.

1. Exercise is the most important thing in my life.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree
2. My friends and/or family and I have argued about how much I exercise.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree
3. I use exercise as a way of changing my mood (i.e. get a "runner's high" or escape/relieve stress)
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree
4. Over the past six months I've increased the amount of exercise I do in a day.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree
5. If I can't workout I feel moody and irritable.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree
6. If I try to cut down on the amount of exercise I do in a day, and then start up again, I always end up exercising as often as I did before.
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

CALCULATE YOUR RESULTS: Add up your answers and check your score below to see where you fall.

A=1 point
B= 2 points
C= 3 points
D= 4 points
E= 5 points

Score of 0-12—Not at Risk

There is such a thing as a positive addiction to exercise, says Jeffrey Pauline, a sports psychology consultant. When you're able to successfully integrate an exercise routine in with other aspects of your life, you are in balance. By keeping your priorities in line, you're ensuring that you have a healthy relationship with exercise.

Score of 13-24—Symptomatic

Key indicators of an exercise addiction include increasing your time at the gym consistently week after week, lying about your workout habits, and sacrificing other things in life to exercise says Tiffany Jones, sports psychology consult. If this is where you're headed, scale back your workouts and make a conscious effort to take a day or two off.

Score of 24-30—At Risk

You are organizing your life around your exercise routine and it's beginning to have adverse affects. "When it's hurting your personal life is when exercise goes against what's good for you," Jones says. She suggests consulting a sport psychologist or clinical psychologist for advice and treatment.