

Balance Your World

Healthy Focused People
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with *Lynn Fraser*

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5 Powerful Tips You Can Learn From Your Body Mechanic

By Lynn Fraser, The Practical Life Balance Expert

Sometimes (actually often) I wonder what vehicle owners are thinking.

My mother-in-law, Kay, drove a standard Nissan Micra for years until one day it just wouldn't start. Her mechanic discovered that she hadn't changed the oil for months – she thought she could just put gas in it and keep driving it without any maintenance. (Where was her Mechanical Engineer son when she needed him?) Fortunately for her, a fresh oil change and new spark plugs enabled her to drive her little car for years. As you well know though, this story doesn't always end up with a happy ending like hers. Often it means dropping in a new or rebuilt engine.

Since you likely rely on your vehicle to get you to and from work every week, you probably maintain your vehicle without giving it a second thought. Right? Vehicle Maintenance 101.

What About Body Maintenance 101?

Sometimes (actually often) I wonder what body owners are thinking.

My neighbor, Jack, works 12 hour shifts, drives everywhere, spends evenings in front of the TV, loves his 12 oz. steaks and shuns vegetables, chain smokes, has a beer belly and to top it off, he drinks excessively. He's a health crisis waiting to happen! And dropping in a rebuilt heart or lungs isn't as simple a fix as a fresh oil change and spark plugs for Kay's car.

So what's with Jack? He's like some of you: stressed out, tired, overweight and inactive - plus, he has a few bad habits he's not willing to change unless he's forced to. According to Statistics Canada, Jack's not alone.

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Where The Tread Hits The Road: The Hard Facts

The 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey: Nutrition found that 23% or 5.5 million Canadian adults are obese. Another 8.6 million or 36% are overweight. This means the majority of Canadian adults – almost 60% are in a weight range that increased their risk of developing health problems. As you might expect, the likelihood of being obese is related to diet and exercise. Men and women who eat fruit and vegetables less than three times a day are more likely to be obese than those who eat their veggies five or more times a day. 27% of sedentary men are obese, compared with 19.6% of active men.

Yet overweight Canadians are in denial. A new survey of nearly 5,000 men and women in six major Canadian cities found that the majority of overweight people polled agreed that overweight people are “extremely” or “very much” at risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. But fewer than 25% felt the risks applied to them. (In Alberta, just 9% of fat Calgarians described themselves as “extremely” or “very much” at risk of heart disease.)

“You can pay me now or pay me later.”

Remember the Shell Answer Man? He put it simply. You can either pay your mechanic to do the preventative maintenance on your vehicle NOW or you can pay him HEAPS more later when the problems that arise are waaay beyond the simple fix stage.

It's the same with your body. You can “pay me now” by following the 5 Powerful Tips You Can Learn From Your Body Mechanic.

5 Powerful Tips You Can Learn From Your Body Mechanic

1. Veg Out & Fuel up.

- a. Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable daily. Go for broccoli, romaine lettuce, spinach, carrots, sweet potatoes and winter squash. Enjoy vegetables steamed, baked or stir-fried instead of deep-fried. All forms are great fuel: fresh, frozen, dried and canned.

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- b. Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day. Be adventurous! Try barley, brown and wild rice, oats and bulgur. Whole wheat pasta with a tomato based sauce provides good fiber and fuel to keep you going.
- c. Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often. Choose two, 75 g servings of fish weekly. Char, herring, mackerel, salmon, sardines and trout are top picks. Select lean meat, trimming the fat on meats and removing the skin on poultry. Roast, bake, stir-fry, BBQ or poach using very little oil and salt-free seasonings.
- d. Select lower fat milk alternatives. Compare the nutrition facts tables on yogurts and cheeses to make wise choices.

2. Check your fluid levels (and types).

- a. Drink 500 mL (2 cups) of milk every day for bone health and adequate vitamin D. Alternatively, drink fortified soy beverages. Shake them vigorously before drinking to dissolve the settled vitamins and minerals.
- b. If you're over 50, take a daily vitamin D supplement of 400 IU.
- c. If you drink pop on a regular basis, try alternating one pop with one water, milk or unsweetened juice. Gradually limit your pop intake to special occasions.

3. Schedule regular oil changes.

- a. Include a small amount – 30 to 45 mL (2 to 3 Tbsp) – of unsaturated fat each day. This includes oil used for cooking, salad dressings, margarine and mayonnaise.
- b. Use canola, olive and soybean oils.
- c. Choose soft, non-hydrogenated margarines that are low in saturated and trans fats.
- d. Limit butter, hard margarine, lard and shortening. *(Remember the general rule of thumb: fats that are liquid or softer at room temperature are a healthier choice than those that are solid at room temperature.)*

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4. Refer to your Owners Manual.

- a. Nutrition Facts tables on packaged food are like the owners manual for your car. Compare the Nutrition Facts tables on different products to choose foods that contain LESS of the following: fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar and sodium.
- b. Use the Nutrition Facts tables to choose foods that contain MORE of these nutrients: calcium, iron, fiber and vitamins.
- c. Compare the serving sizes listed at the top of the table with how much you actually eat. For example, if the serving size is 1/6 pizza (111 g) and you eat 3 slices of that pizza, you need to multiply the calories, each listed nutrient % and the % Daily Value by three to get an accurate picture.)
- d. Check for the Health Check logo on more than 1500 food products. Based on Canada's Food Guide, the Heart and Stroke Foundation developed the Health Check program in 1999 to guide you to choose nutrient dense foods using the logo, explanatory message and nutrition information right on food packages. Products are evaluated by a team of medical, nutrition, and Heart and Stroke Foundation staff so you can feel confident that Health Check products are a healthy choice for you and your family.

5. Drive it!

- a. If you park your vehicle for extended periods of time and don't use it, the parts corrode and the engine can seize up. It's the same situation with your body. Get active daily, 30 to 60 minutes per day. You don't have to do it all at once. Slice it into 10 minute chunks. Take the stairs up from the parkade to the main floor. Take a walk when you need a fresh perspective on a challenge at work. Trade an hour of TV a few times a week for a tennis match, swim or cycle. Walk the dog; don't just watch the dog walk!

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Regular Tune-ups Save You Grief

One thing you know for sure, regular tune ups keep your vehicle in good shape and save you money and worry. Ditto for your body. So be realistic! Make small changes over time. Take one of the above tips and apply it in your life in the next 7 days. You will notice that you feel better, have more energy and can focus better both at work and in your personal life. Remember ... YOU are worth it!

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About the author: Lynn Fraser, The Practical Life Balance Expert, invites individuals within businesses and families to wholeheartedly lead enjoyable, healthy & focused lives. Visit her website at www.lynnfraser.ca

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