

DISCOVER ||| Opinion

We just ran out of excuses for not getting fit

■ All we really need is 20 minutes of intense exercise a day. Even three short, brisk walks daily will do it.



Dianne Rinchart

If “lack of time” was your No. 1 excuse for not exercising, you’re foiled.

Working out for 20 minutes in short intense bursts of effort, separated by a few minutes of recovery, can provide the same health benefits as two hours of daily moderate exercise, says McMaster University’s Martin Gibala.

Indeed, the associate professor of kinesiology’s test subjects, who performed four to six 30-second bursts

of all-out cycling separated by four minutes of recovery, achieved the same increase in fitness levels as those doing 90-120 minutes of moderate cycling.

Gibala isn’t suggesting you ditch Health Canada guidelines, which recommend 30 to 60 minutes of moderate exercise every day. But on days when you have “no time,” 20 minutes of intense activity will do it. If you normally walk, walk a bit faster, he suggests.

Which throws my classic excuse – I don’t have an hour for a run, so I won’t do one at all – out the window.

Luckily, there are plenty of others to draw on – well four to be exact, says Kathleen Martin Ginis, another McMaster associate professor of kinesiology. They are: boredom (I don’t like exercise), convenience or availability (There’s nowhere to exercise and the gym is too expensive!), climate (It’s too hot! It’s too

cold!), and physical limitation (I’m too tired. My knee hurts!)

None of them good enough, though, if you accept Martin Ginis’s recommendation: Don’t think of it as “exercise” but as “active living!”

Walk partway to work, take the stairs, build in three 10-minute walks a day, go for a bike ride or play with the kids, she suggests. Sound easy? Sometimes it seems there’s a plot against getting started down that healthy living path.

Take walking and running. While falling leaves bode well for women who fear using leafy trails because sex predators may be hiding in the bushes, they also herald reduced daylight hours (increasing fears of assault) and hazardous ice and snow.

That’s when some people can exercise by shovelling snow, says Martin Ginis – focusing on the positive! – or by visiting malls with walking programs.

Or you could hit the treadmill – if you can find a gym that lets you put memberships on hold during warmer months. Good luck on that.

Initiation fees, automatic account debiting (even after your contract ends) and fine print that can make it

practically impossible to terminate a contract – for one man, apparently even death didn’t do it – are just a few experiences that can turn consumers off exercise, never mind gyms.

Exaggeration? Take a look at the 139,000 hits you get on Google with: “fitness clubs consumer rights” – especially demoralizing because fitness clubs should be encouraging us, right?

But even the best have bureaucratic rules – 30 days notice to put your membership on hold while you’re out of the country or to terminate it if you’re moving, for example – that can make the most committed hesitant about, well, committing.

Still, with studies indicating 59 per cent of Canadians, including 26 per cent of kids, are overweight, and associated health problems such as heart attack, stroke, diabetes and sleep apnea soaring, it’s imperative we find solutions.

How about a consumer association that gives a “seal of approval” to consumer-friendly clubs that meet set standards?

And how about government promoting active environments in com-

munities – bike paths, walking trails, green space – and active transportation systems, says Martin Ginis. Consider Vienna, where bicycle kiosks – where residents simply pick up a bike, drive it across town, and drop it at another kiosk – dot the city, she says. Why not put bike racks on buses, she asks.

And while the new tax rebate for equipment for kids in organized sports, touted by the Conservative government, is “messy” – what’s considered physical activity and what’s not requires a committee to decide – other incentives, like making fitness-club memberships tax deductible or insurance companies giving discounts to the physically active, are good ideas, she says.

As a runner, I’d add: enforcing snow-removal bylaws so runners and walkers, alike – especially seniors – can safely navigate in winter. And city plowing and grooming of public walkways and trails.

It’s got to be cheaper than paying for triple bypass surgery for us all – right?

Dianne Rinchart is an Ottawa-based writer.

Pope Benedict reveals his intolerance

■ The new Pope isn’t genuinely sorry about his comments on Muslims, only sorry about the reactions in some countries to them.



Gwynne Dyer

On a scale of one to 10, Pope Benedict’s first attempt at an apology was barely a three. He said nothing himself, but Cardinal Tarcsio Bertone told the world on Saturday that, “The Holy Father is very sorry that some passages of his speech may have sounded offensive to the sensibilities of Muslim believers.”

That didn’t stop the protests that have been building in the Muslim world since the Pope gave the speech Sept. 12 to an academic audience in Germany, so on Sunday he tried again. He said: “I am deeply sorry for the reactions in some countries to a few passages of my address at the University of Regensburg, which were considered offensive to the sensibility of Muslims.”

That won’t stop the protests either, because he really isn’t sorry for what he said. He’s sorry for “the reactions in some countries” to his remarks, but implicitly stands by what he said in Regensburg.

So is the new Pope really anti-Muslim?

After the 9/11 attacks, the former Cardinal Ratzinger told Vatican Radio, “it is important not to attribute simplistically what happened to Islam,” but then he added that “the

history of Islam also contains a tendency to violence.” True enough, but Christianity has its own history of violence: the Crusades, the Inquisition, the religious wars that devastated Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries and several other detours from tolerance.

Just before he became Pope last year, Benedict declared Turkey should not be allowed into the European Union because its Islamic culture is incompatible with the Christian culture of Europe. But the real case for the prosecution rests on his invitation to Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci to visit him at the papal summer home last September.

It certainly wasn’t a religious visit, since Fallaci (who died last week) was an atheist and her fame as a war correspondent and interviewer was decades behind her. But she carved out a second career as the most extreme anti-Muslim writer in Europe, producing two best-selling books since 2002 that vilified Muslims as dirty sub-humans who multiply “like rats,” and portrayed Islam as an irrational religion that breeds hatred.

The title of her second to last book, the one that presumably inspired the Pope’s invitation, was *The Force of Reason*. Its core argument was that the West is rational and reasonable and Muslims aren’t. And there was Benedict in Germany last week, saying exactly the same thing.

What a coincidence. In his speech, Benedict quoted from the 14th century Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus, who told a Persian visitor that, “spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable... God is not pleased by blood.” So far, so good, but then Manuel asked his Muslim visitor:

“Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.” Benedict quoted that, too, without any further comment.

He ended his speech by quoting the emperor again, “not to act reasonably, not to act with logos, is contrary to the nature of God,” said Manuel II, according to his Christian understanding of God. ... It is to this great logos, to this breadth of reason, that we invite our partners in the dialogue of cultures.” In other words, you Muslims are unreasonable people, but if you do it our way, then we’ll finally get somewhere. So now we know the new Pope is a parochial and intolerant man, but anybody

who paid attention to Cardinal Ratzinger’s previous career knew that already. “God’s Rottweiler” was the late Pope John Paul’s favourite hit man, reducing Karol Wojtyla’s critics in the Catholic hierarchy to sullen silence or driving them out of the church altogether.

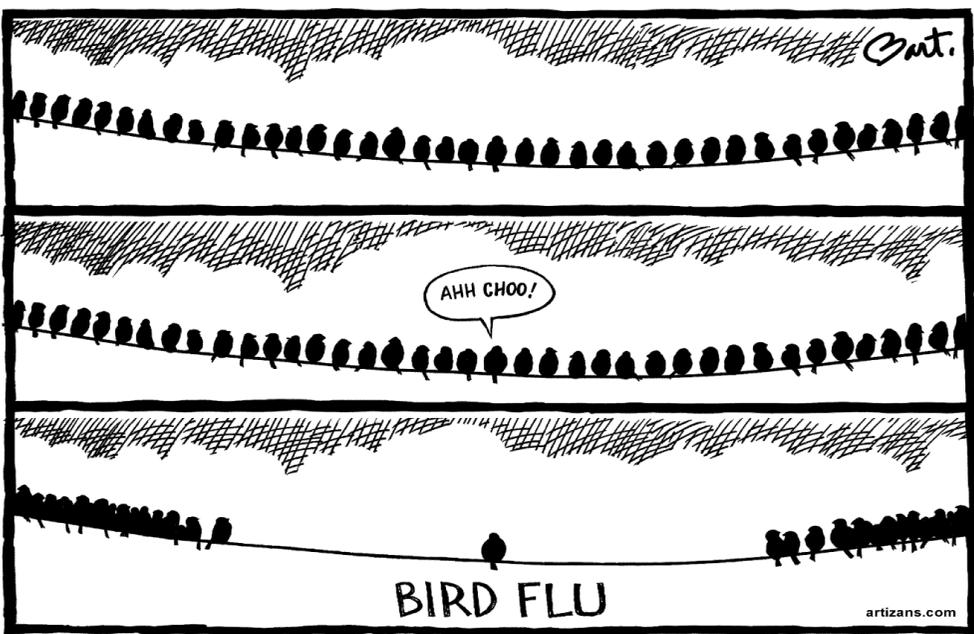
Pakistan’s parliament has unanimously passed a resolution condemning the Pope’s speech. Seven Christian churches in the occupied Palestinian territories have been bombed, set ablaze or shot at. A Catholic nun was shot to death in Somalia. Most Muslims are well aware violence is an inappropriate way to protest against accusations that Islam is a violent faith, but why do they even care what the Pope says? The real reason for the uproar

is that so many Muslims feel under attack by the West. Two Muslim countries have been invaded by the U.S. and its allies since 9/11 and another, Lebanon, has been bombed to ruins.

At least 20 times as many Muslims have died in these wars as the number of Americans who died in the 9/11 attacks and almost none of them had anything to do with that atrocity. So the suspicion grows among Muslims that all this is not really about 9/11 at all and almost any minor insult to Islam from the West is enough to trigger outrage from Morocco to Indonesia.

Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

DISCOVER ||| editorial cartoons



‘Terror’ is becoming a marketing slogan

■ Rather than confronting the Iranian leader, Bush aides spent the day at the UN playing cat and mouse with him



Maurcen Dowd

It was galling to be lectured on ethics, truth, justice, virtue and respect for the rights of human beings by a Holocaust-denying, Iraq-meddling, American-hating pipsqueak. A guy who showed up to address the United Nations without even bothering to wear a tie, so casual in a disco-looking cream suit and open-necked pink shirt he looked like he was going to kick back later in Chelsea.

If President Bush was bland, oblique and condescending in his UN remarks, bypassing President Mahmoud Ah-

madinejad to speak directly to the people of Iran, the Iranian leader was more blunt – referring to the United States and Britain disdainfully as “the occupiers.”

“Not a day goes by without hundreds of people getting killed in cold blood,” he said. “The occupiers are incapable of establishing security in Iraq.”

Iranian leaders love nothing more than taunting U.S. presidents, as we learned when Jimmy Carter was emasculated during the hostage crisis. And so it was with Ahmadinejad, who took W. and Dick Cheney’s refrain about how Republicans are needed to stiffen the U.S.’s will and threw it back at them.

“There is no indication,” he needed, “that the occupiers have the necessary political will to eliminate the sources of instability.”

All day the White House team went through gyrations not to run into the Iranian leader, fearful to be caught in

the same frame, perhaps haunted by memories of that picture of a smiling Rummy shaking Saddam’s hand in 1983.

It seemed a little silly, given what a tough guy W. acts like. If he ran into the punk, he could have just told him to quit processing uranium, and moved on. Bush aides assured reporters with asperity that they were not studying the Iranian president’s route or bathroom schedule, that such a fixation would only build up a foe they were trying to cut down to size.

But it’s a little late for that, with Ahmadinejad staring from the cover of *Time* with a story on What War With Iran Would Look Like, and with Sen. George Voinovich calling him “Ah-mad-in-a-head” and “a Hitler type of person” at a Senate committee hearing on Tuesday. (Can’t pols just have little Post-its on their microphones reminding them not to compare anything with the Nazis?)

Bush played down Osama for five years, while he focused on Iraq. But his ill-fated detour into Baghdad just ended up magnifying another enemy and giving Ahmadinejad a huge strategic opportunity to stoke the growing fundamentalist and radical

Shiite surge unleashed by the bungled occupation. Because W. blew off diplomacy with Iraq, he is now hostage to diplomacy with Iran.

The Iranian president sounded more scornful of the UN than Dick Cheney. “If the governments of the United States or the United Kingdom, who are permanent members of the Security Council, commit aggression, occupation and violation of international law, which of the organs of the UN can take them to account?” he asked.

With their usual cultural tone-deafness, W. and Dick Cheney failed to appreciate the shrewdness of their nemesis, and continued to arrogantly act as though everything is going along great in their clash of civilizations.

W. went through a gauzy litany of progress on “democratizing” the Middle East, and speaking to auto dealers on Tuesday morning, Vice applied a Harry Truman phrase about the Cold War, calling the war against terrorists a “war of nerves.”

He said this is “a test of our character,” and then went on to defend all the administration’s attempts to put itself above the law on the wiretapping, torture and detention programs that

have undermined the U.S.’s moral repute in the world.

John McCain seems untroubled with those who say that his stand on torture might hurt him with the Republican base in 2008.

After making nice with his former rival, W., for so long, the war hero probably enjoys getting in National Guard boy’s face a little on an issue of principle.

W. has now put so many bad actors in the terror stew – some of whom hate each other – and has justified so many sketchy programs under the war-on-terror rubric, that the word “terror” is losing all meaning and just becoming a marketing slogan. Even the Republican columnist Peggy Noonan says that W. can sound like “a historical drama queen.”

If our pursuit of terrorists who harmed us and want to hurt us again gets too diffuse, it’s pointless and counterproductive. The president’s refusal to understand what’s at stake in the torture debate is itself a kind of torture for Americans who don’t want our moral power – and our pursuit of al-Qaeda – diluted.

The New York Times