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How good is "good enough"?

Wednesday, December 05, 2012

I want to be healthy, active and fit. I want to make my grandchildren proud, but how I feel at the end of the race, or workout or even at the end of the day matters to me too.

I certainly don't want to feel like I'm about to drop dead. I once said that my goal is to be able to smile for the camera at the finish line.

So how hard do I push when I see the finish line ahead? I've been told that I don't "leave it all out there." When you see me happily running around after the race is over, talking to anyone who will listen to me, I understand where people get that idea.

I think I'm a competitive person. I want to do well. I even want to win stuff, but I have this innate sense of "good enough."

My weight is "good enough" (right in the middle of recommended BMI).

My running pace is "good enough." I'm not any slower than I was 25 years ago, so I guess that counts as improvement.

My weekly mileage is "good enough" (15-25 miles per week)

My run/walk ratio is "good enough. Even at my best, I walk 1 minute in every mile even though I could push through. I sip water, wipe my nose and check my heart rate (I am a senior citizen, you know). In Saturday's 5K (32:15) I walked a total of 8 minutes. It's a tough course.

Come to think of it, this attitude extends to other areas of my life as well.

When out and about and need to eat, I'll choose Subway. It's not perfect, but "good enough."

When there's absolutely nothing in the fridge to cook for dinner, I'll choose a Healthy Choice steamer. Again, for me, "good enough"

I don't beat myself up about lack of planning either although I will resolve to update that grocery list.

Probably this also explains why I never had or will have a perfect body. I never was or will be an adult champion athlete either although I was pretty good as a kid.

There's only one problem with "good enough." As society lowers its expectations of what's possible to achieve in weight and level of fitness, am I just buying into the false self esteem?

I've written before about how vanity sizing in clothes, bigger dishes, bigger furniture and supersizing of portions have distorted what we think of as normal. A whole generation is growing up thinking that there's something wrong with women who wear size 0-2-4. That's what healthy weight women used to wear, but it was called sizes 8-10-12. That group includes Marilyn Monroe!

There are even "age graded" calculators for race times. Based on my age and gender my 32:15 translates to a 24:02. That makes me feel good, but doesn't alter reality.

"Good enough" is absolutely fine with me as long as I don't deny reality or define "good" as the lowest

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common denominator. Maybe I can be better than I am? I wish I had considered this 30 years ago.

I wrote the above post before reading the following article.

online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323330604578145462264024472.html?mod=googlenews_wsj.

Scary title – “One Running Shoe in the Grave” Yet upon reading it carefully, I think this is one more sensational attempt to make me feel good about not putting in too much effort. The article contains relevant research about the VERY FITTEST OLDER ENDURANCE ATHLETES! 99.9% of us are NOT in that category. More than 30 years of sub 8 min/mile pace and more than 25 miles per week? Is anybody here in that group?

Often after weight loss women hear “you don’t want to be anorexic do you?” I hope the title of this article doesn’t become another excuse to justify sitting on the couch.

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SARAWALKS



Yay you! I like LOLATURTLE AND MJZHERE's comments. And I thought the article made sense. I think the main point was, listen to your own body and don't get caught up in attaining a goal for the goal's sake. Keep it in perspective. I am on the top edge of my healthy BMI and I'd like to be a bit more in the center, but I want to keep enjoying running even as I get stronger and faster. I don't really long to do marathons...so like CELLISTA I need to push myself a bit more when I can. At age 67, with strong tendencies to read a lot, I'm not really in danger of endangering myself...more of not challenging myself. But I hear what they are saying. and I think it's an

important message for some. YOU sound like you are in a very good place.
3112 days ago



CD13252816



I admire your take on "good enough". Who's to say what "enough" is and how does "good" get into the mix? It's taken me a long time to tune out defeating inner messages in favor of more realistic ones. You wouldn't be so hard on a friend so why send hate messages to yourself? I'm becoming more comfortable in my own body and that's good enough for me.



3112 days ago



MIRAGE727



Here's my bottom line. I don't really care about what everyone's measurement of success is. Society has such twisted values now that I really don't give any a second thought. I focus on ME and MY journey! Every time, I race, I try to beat my best time. I weigh everyday. I know what my go-to meals are. I'm not bored. I fuel clean. Because that's the way I roll. My success stands alone. If you are "good" about what you do, that's cool. If you aren't, set small challenges for yourself. A little at a time and increasing it slowly will go a long way. Thanks for sharing and all the best!



3112 days ago



CD8467616



It's funny, your blog made me realize something exactly opposite to you. I often whine (in my head) that whatever I do is "never enough." After reading your blog and the comments, I thought "Wait a minute. What I do really isn't enough!" That's why it's always the same old whine. For me to get to "good enough" I have to work a little harder!

Clearly, that "good enough" place is different for everybody. The point being that awareness, wisdom, judgment, and maturity are involved.

3112 days ago

STRIVER57



i think we all have different standards for good enough and they vary according to lots of factors. i run faster at 61 than i did 30 years ago ... because i didn't run until i was 59! and i'd like to



be a bit faster ... but just a bit (well actually the goal is a 2:25-30 half in florence, to not get swept up. we shall see). i wanna feel i worked at it. and am constantly surprised at how good working at it feels.

3112 days ago



BOILHAM

I read a bit of that article, then skimmed the rest. I am suspicious of articles like this. Writers these days seem to spin everything to get the effect they desire from the reader. It's not reporting, it's spinning. I bet someone could take the time and easily write a contradictory article to this writer's article, citing other doctors and opinions of different so called experts. So, call me a curmudgeon, I don't trust much of what I read or hear unless I verify it myself with additional evidence.

Good enough is good enough. I wrote a blog about that not long ago. It has been speculated that my "good enough" is at a higher standard than the average person's good enough. Maybe. I suspect your good enough is better than good enough as well.

3112 days ago



SLENDERELLA61

Interesting blog! I find it very hard to find good enough. Sounds like you really are doing great. Did you say you run as fast as you did 25 years ago? That sounds amazingly more than good enough!!

3113 days ago



DEBBY4576

I loved this blog. What you are is moderate in all things. As long as you stay moderate, you won't change with what is accepted sizes now days or stop eating meat because of new research (that changes later). I love you!!! Hee hee. I think with age comes much wisdom. And.....I refuse to be old. I don't feel old, and I eat right, and well....I'm just good enough like you and dang proud of it.

3113 days ago



MJZHERE

Everything tends to have two sides - and the other one to this is for things to never be good enough (no matter what which leads to discontent). Reality check for you is that you stay in the middle - "right in the middle of the bmi range." Though society may continue to adapt, helping to lead us to reality denial, my body continues to tell me the truth - it isn't happy carrying extra weight.

3113 days ago



LOLATURTLE

Thank you for the comment on my page! Your blogs are always great.

This one is very thought provoking! I think your good enough is in fact good enough. Echoing what others have said - it's common sense, and your "good enough" is well above what society is increasingly accepting as normal. You are healthy and active, and I feel doing that in a way that makes you happy is, well, the right way to do it!

I think the important thing is, you know you COULD push yourself further athletically - for competition or prizes or what have you. But for fitness you enjoy that keeps you healthy, your running pace, weight, etc., works for you. You're not selling yourself short, you're choosing who and where you want to be, and there's nothing wrong with that. We don't all want to or need to be top tier competitive athletes to be healthy and active.

3113 days ago



CD13136117

You have a great talent in writing!! I need to print and keep this one - your "good enough" is way, way above the average. Great inspiration!!



3113 days ago



SUZYMOBILE

Well, that was a sobering article, but I don't think I'd want to stay on the couch instead of walking 5-6 miles a day. I love my walking! Guess I'm in denial about it putting me one foot in the grave. On the other hand, I don't think it quite falls in the ultramarathon category or even in the same category as your awesome 5K time! "Good enough" is, in this sense, good enough for me.

3113 days ago



NANNABLACK

I needed to read this this week!! Thank you!

3113 days ago



FITFOODIE806

I love your blogs. Thanks for sharing this.

The published study clearly does have an agenda. I'm glad the author makes it clear that many disagree with the findings.

My dad has been running for 30 years. An endurance athlete by some standards since he's run 15 marathons. But to others, that's not a lot. Recently he had an angiogram and the heart surgeon said he had an "athlete's heart" clear arteries and strong heart. I like that research!

3113 days ago

Comment edited on: 12/5/2012 7:57:15 AM



TINAJANE76

I'm also often content to be "good enough." I know I'm a long way from my old obese self so I don't need to kill myself to reach a weight or level of fitness that's impossible to attain without resorting to drastic measures. I'm happy, healthy and feel reasonably confident about the way I look. That suits me just fine!

3113 days ago



WILSONWR

You have a very good "common sense" approach to fitness and running. Although I was never supposed to run again, I'm still not happy at only being able to run a mile in a little under 10 minutes. I guess I still remember the day I ran a mile in 5:25 in military Basic Training while wearing combat boots! I just need to be satisfied that I am running again and becoming much more healthy. A little competitiveness is good, but sometimes I push too hard. I guess I need to remember that I am 60 now - I should be able to let up just a little (ha!).

3113 days ago



COCK-ROBIN

Very good! I'm proud of you.

3113 days ago



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