

The 30 Pound Club

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January 12, 2012 – Grand Rapids, MI

Stress Makes Us Stronger

As I write this, Grand Rapids is getting ready for a snow storm with high winds along with drifting and blowing snow. It will be inconvenient for awhile, but Grand Rapids is well prepared for this kind of event and we'll get through it just as we have before. Inevitably, there will be some branches on trees and maybe entire trees that won't make it; they'll break or fall over from the wind and the weight of the snow. Probably happens where you live as well except for those of you in places like Orlando and Orange County—but then your trees have completely different kinds of stressors.

Here's something you may not realize. The heaviness of the snow and the severity of the wind that takes some trees down will make other trees stronger. The stress on the trunks and the branches will cause the tree to make those weak areas stronger, and that will protect the tree in the future. Of course, every limb and trunk could break with perhaps one more force per square inch. But if it doesn't, it will be stronger. That's why arborists recommend taking the stakes off of a young tree sooner rather than later; it will grow to be a stronger tree if it stands up to the stress of wind and storms.

What does this have to do with weight loss and fitness? Every time you started a fitness program and stopped, you learned something. Every time you dieted and failed, you learned something. You stressed your body and while it seemed like you failed, you didn't: you found one more way that didn't work for you. What you failed to do is to realize that you are stronger for trying.

What? Am I kidding? Absolutely not. The only reason you feel like you've failed instead of gotten stronger is your perspective. You're looking at attempts at weight loss as success or failure. That's not exactly correct except by standards we've set in our own mind. If you think of it as a stressful event—which exercise and eating less are—you're actually stronger for the next attempt. All you have to do is realize that, find a different approach, and get back at it. Fail again. Learn more. Society conditions us to think of weight loss in terms success or failure, but it's neither—it's a learning experience.

The stress of your last attempt will make you stronger for the next one. Review it, think about it, figure out another approach, and get after it. Find the one way that will work for you, because you don't run out of chances to begin again until you're dead or bedridden—and even being bedridden doesn't stop some people. See the message from December 31 (drchet.com/email/2011-4/12-31-2011.html) for an example of unstoppable.

Either you let stress stop you or you deal with it. In the 30 Pound Club, we deal with it. Why?

Because it's One and Done.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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