



YOUR HEALTH

# Volunteer for Your Health

**H**elping others is one of the best ways to help ourselves in terms of mental and physical health. It gives us feelings of satisfaction to donate time and money to our favorite causes.

There is the camaraderie of working with others toward a common goal, the feeling of commitment toward an important cause and the positive relationships that come from volunteer work — all enough reason to sign up today with an organization making a difference in your community.

The Corporation for National and Community Service reports the following five benefits to volunteering:

- Solving problems;
- Strengthening communities;
- Improving lives;
- Connecting to others; and
- Transforming our own lives.

## **BENEFIT YOUR HEALTH**

The CNCS performs annual research on the state of volunteering in America and recently issued “The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research.” The study’s findings report a strong correlation between volunteering and health, stating that those who volunteer have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability and lower rates of depression later in life than those who do not volunteer.

The volunteering sweet spot seems to be about 100 hours per year, according to the CNCS, as volunteers in



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this range are most likely to exhibit positive health outcomes. Age group comparisons also show that older volunteers are the most likely to receive greater benefits from volunteering.

## **START SLOWLY**

You want volunteering to remain an enjoyable experience, so try not to take away too much of your family or work time in doing so. Know how much free time you have

during the week and carve out some time for volunteering.

The last thing you want to do is experience burnout that leaves you stressed out and overtired. Especially if you're

trying to fit volunteering into a packed schedule of full-time work, kids and extracurricular activities, it's best to start slow with volunteering and gradually invest more time as you can.

# Working from Home

**T**echnology has catalyzed an explosion of work-from-home opportunities for today's workers.

From freelance professionals running their own businesses to workers performing outsourced tasks, more people than ever before are working from the comfort of their own homes.

While not having to leave the house is a convenience in many ways, it also can present challenges to maintaining a healthy diet and exercise routine. The key is to create and follow a routine, just as you would if you were leaving your home for the office.

## WATCH YOUR DIET

From-home working means you're literally steps away from the chips, cookies and soda in the pantry. Avoid these sugary, non-nutritious snacks at all costs. Choose a room as far away from your kitchen or pantry as possible to avoid temptations, and spend the majority of your workday there.

Challenge yourself to indulge in vegetables and fruits, especially at snack time. The vitamins and nutrients in these healthy options will give you the energy you need to pull off that big project or put in extra hours for a busy week. And they are much more beneficial to your diet than sugary sodas or caffeine-loaded coffee.

## STICK TO SCHEDULED BREAKS

Take breaks consistently around the same time every day. Build in a couple of short breaks a couple of hours before and after your lunch, and choose healthy snack options while you're away from the computer.

Re-energize your body with a walk around the yard, some push-ups or sit-ups. Or simply head outside for some fresh air. Check the mail or let the dog out for a couple of minutes — anything to help you mentally and physically get away from work.

## MAKE TIME FOR EXERCISE

It can be difficult to find time for your body while you're working from home. You have to make it a priority. People who exercise regularly feel more energy and can stay mentally sharp for longer than people who don't. These benefits will help you get more work done and feel energized to put in long, strong workdays.

Set alarms on your phone for a certain time in the morning and afternoon each day. When your alarm goes off, spend the next 15 minutes exercising. Work out with free weights or sweat to a dance video. Take a jog or a walk around the neighborhood. These 30 minutes of exercise per day can make a positive impact on how you feel and work.



# Post-Pregnancy Weight Loss

**Y**ou've put in a long nine months and watched your body expand. You've been poked and prodded, weighed and measured — all for the benefit of the newest member of your family.

But it's all worth it once your little bundle of joy makes his or her arrival in to the world.

When it's time to focus on you again, it can be difficult getting started. Your body can naturally lose about 10 to 12 pounds during the labor experience. But what about the remaining weight you picked up to support the development and growth of your baby? This weight — specifically the last 10 pounds — can be a thorn in your side for months to come.

Fortunately, with some smart eating and exercise decisions, you can be on your way to your pre-pregnancy weight in no time. The most important thing to consider is your physician's advice on returning to regular exercise and dieting. Follow medical recommendations at all times to let your body heal correctly after childbirth.



## KITCHEN AND GROCERY STORE STRATEGIES

Exercise will be crucially important to your weight-loss goals, but you may not be cleared to work out for a few weeks after labor. Get a head start by devoting your diet to healthy options in the kitchen and grocery store.

Even if you work out daily, what you eat plays a huge role in whether or not your body will burn enough fat to help

you reach your objectives. Commit yourself to spending some time in the kitchen, between spending time with your new baby, of course. If people offer to bring you lunch or dinners, ask them politely to make them as healthy as possible.

Send your significant other to the grocery store for some

fresh produce and meats. Experts recommend spending the majority of your shopping time on the perimeter of grocery stores — where the produce and frozen vegetables are usually located. More time here and less time in the middle of the store where sugary snacks and sodas live can be a key to choosing

healthy foods for your diet.

## AVOID PROCESSED FOODS

Foods in their natural form will be your best bet for fueling your body with healthful options. These include meats, vegetables, eggs and fruits that haven't been processed to make them last longer on the shelves of your grocery store.

Use these fresh ingredients to challenge yourself in the kitchen. Learn new recipes. Incorporate new fruits and vegetables into your diet.

The more variety you give yourself, the more likely you will be to stick to healthy options, helping your body shed weight and gain more energy for exercising.

# Consider the Chiropractor

**T**rained to carefully examine and treat muscles, joints, connective tissue and bones, chiropractors can identify and relieve the underlying causes of pain.

Chiropractic specialties can vary across practices, but most professionals are focused on alternatives to drugs or surgery, restoration of nervous system functions, pain relief, pediatric care solutions, massage therapy and relief of headaches, digestive issues, insomnia and asthma.

How do you know if a visit to the chiropractor is right for you? Chiropractors can offer treatment to alleviate pain, whether you were hurt in a vehicle accident or have recently been experiencing painful symptoms caused by some other source.

## WHAT DOES A VISIT COST?

Visits vary by practice but can actually save you money in the long run, depending on your medical conditions. That's because chiropractors don't prescribe medications or perform expensive surgeries.

Chiropractic care also can help you minimize or avoid the need for lengthy or costly physical therapy. By making adjustments or offering alternative solutions, a chiropractor may be able to keep you out of the operating room.

Call around to different chiropractors in your area to ask about rates and find out if



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your issue can be treated in their offices.

## MORE THAN PAIN RELIEF

Many chiropractors offer health and wellness programs that focus on not only your

physical health but your mental and psychological health, as well.

Most chiropractors encourage you to make lifestyle changes that will improve your health, which in turn can

decrease your susceptibility to injury and pain.

Everyone knows that people who are more physically active generally have less stress and anxiety in their lives.

Because chiropractors encourage exercise and increased physical activity to help alleviate pain, visiting one can lead to positive changes that contribute to an overall better quality of life.

# Keeping the Stress Away

**W**ith the big game or test coming up, now is the perfect time to speak with your child about dealing with stress. All children can experience stress at times.

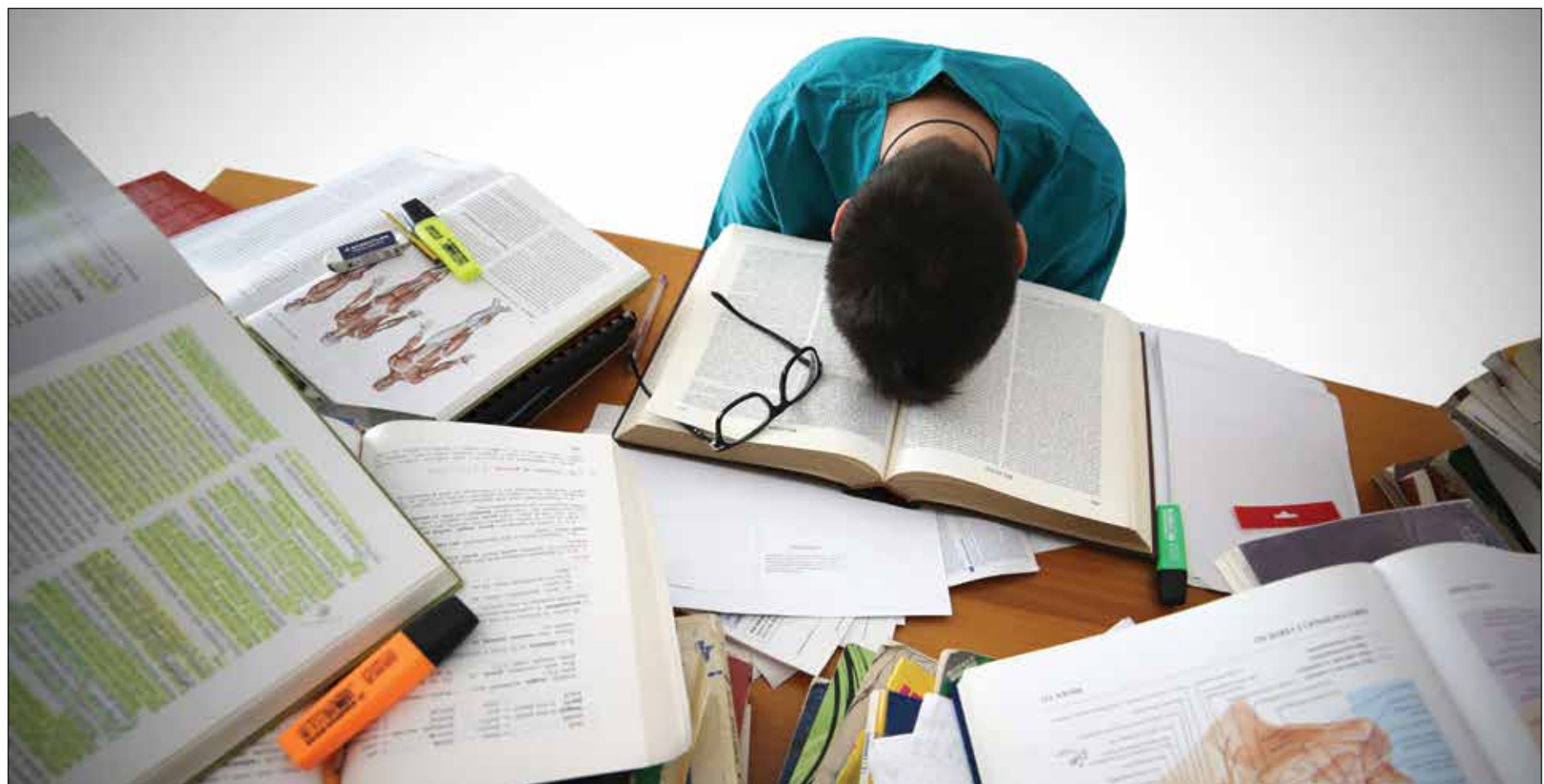
How you address and recognize the things they may be dealing with can make the difference in helping them cope.

## WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a condition that can present symptoms of physical or emotional tension. It can be positive or negative and can impact different people in different ways. Children may be dealing with stress without really knowing what is causing it. That's where parents, siblings, family members and teachers come into the picture.

Be on the lookout for these common reactions to stress, compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Disbelief, shock, and numbness;
- Feeling sad, frustrated, and helpless;
- Fear and anxiety about the future;
- Feeling guilty;
- Anger, tension, and irritability;
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions;
- Crying;
- Reduced interest in usual activities;
- Wanting to be alone;
- Loss of appetite;
- Sleeping too much or too



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little;

- Nightmares or bad memories;
- Recurring thoughts of an event;
- Headaches, back pains, and stomach problems;
- Increased heart rate, difficulty breathing; and
- Smoking or use of alcohol or drugs.

## WAYS TO COPE

Communication can be the

key to children dealing with stress. Encourage them to share their feelings with you, friends, teachers, doctors or a pastor. Open communication lines can make children feel supported in their feelings and help them realize that there are ways to deal with stress.

The CDC offers these tips — and recommends adults following the same guidelines:

- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals and find time for regular

exercise. If you can find friends or family members to exercise with, you can get social benefits out of it, as well.

- Avoid drugs and alcohol because of their long-term impact on stress and the additional problems they can create.

- Take a break if your stress is caused by a national or local event. Don't become obsessed with the news coverage. Talk about the issues

with friends and family members instead and find ways you can help.

- Seek professional help from a psychiatrist or physician. The CDC offers these numbers as resources: Disaster Distress Helpline: (800) 985-5990; National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-TALK; Youth Mental Health Line: (888) 568-1112; Child-Help USA: (800) 422-4453.

# Indoor Air Quality

**A**s Americans, we are taking huge steps toward improving the world around us. We are working in our communities to improve our roads, parks and wildlife.

We are shopping local, eating healthy and conserving water to make a positive impact on the world around us.

We also are shifting our focus on health to the inside of our homes. Smart interior design can make a world of difference on our everyday health and wellness. Where we shop for our products, what types of materials we use and how we clean our homes all play a role.

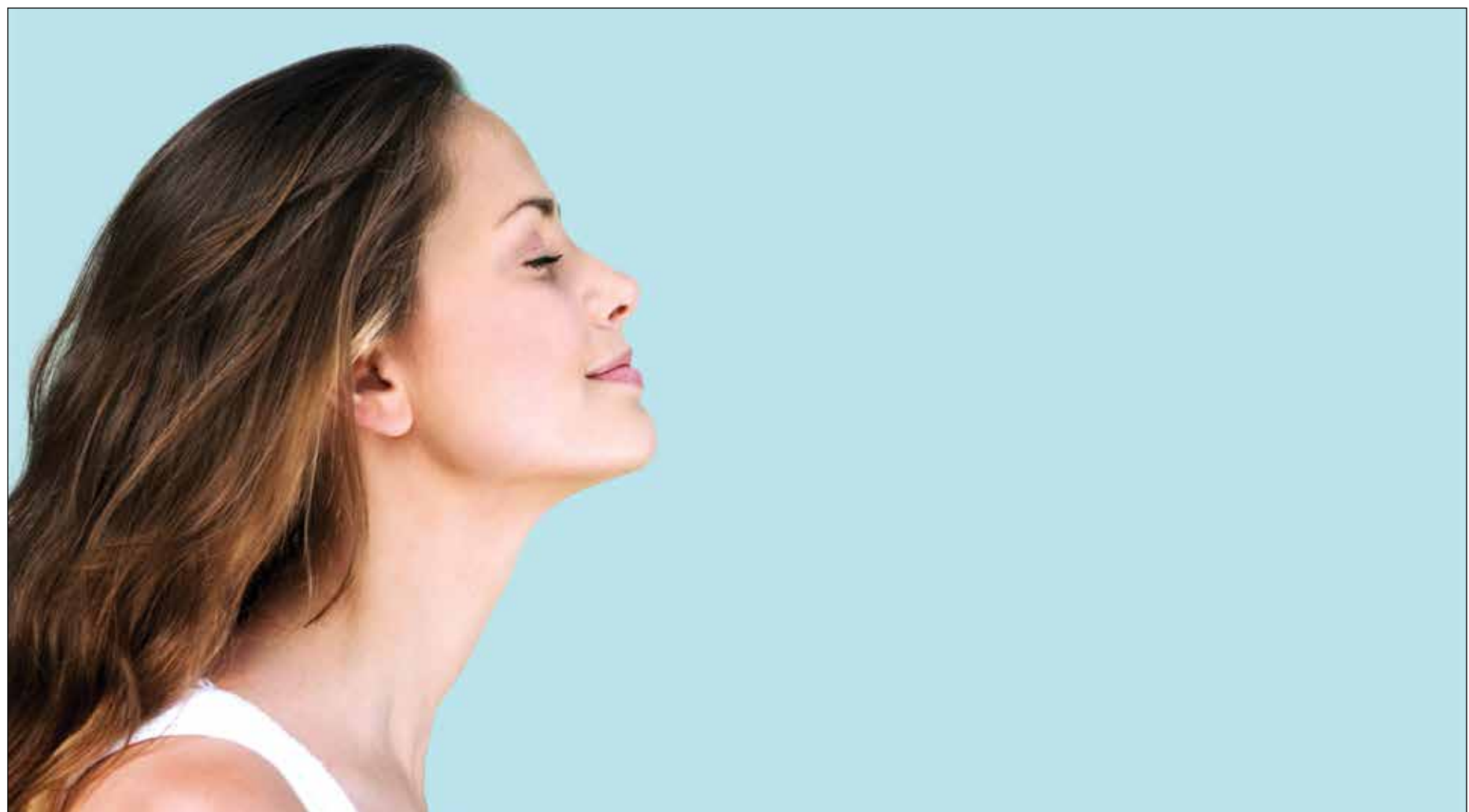
## CONSIDER THE FACTS

Some of research on our indoor air quality is alarming. Consider these facts from the Environmental Protection Agency:

- Indoor air pollution is among the top five environmental dangers;
- The quality of indoor air can be up to 100 times more polluted than the worst outside air; and
- Allergies, asthma, lung cancer and heart problems have all been linked to poor indoor air quality.

## DESIGN WITH VOCs IN MIND

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are present in furniture components such as adhesives, finishes and sealers.



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They also are emitted from various flooring and cleaning materials — and we take them into our bodies without even noticing.

When choosing your materials for a new home or a remodeling project, it's up to you to choose low- or no-VOC options.

More companies have turned their attention to elim-

inating VOCs from their products, so be sure to conduct some research before settling on home materials.

Inquire about VOC levels within your fabrics, bedding, upholstered furniture and case goods.

The more work you put in on the front end, the healthier you can make the indoor air for you and your family.

## ADD HOUSEPLANTS

Houseplants offer multiple benefits for both indoor air quality and overall health. According to recent NASA research, plants are able to effectively remove environmental airborne toxins, helping reduce stress, increase work performance and reduce symptoms of ill health.

The NASA study concluded that in an 1,800-square-foot house, occupants should incorporate 15 to 18 houseplants in 6- to 8-inch diameter containers to improve air quality.

Not only are indoor plants soothing, calming and healthful, they are beautiful elements that can help enhance your home's interior design.

# Pick a Personal Trainer

**H**iring a personal trainer can be a worthwhile investment. A knowledgeable, motivational trainer can get you in shape and teach you safe ways of working out that can benefit you for the rest of your life.

There are many factors to consider when trying to find the perfect personal trainer for your specific goals. Personality type, rates and credentials are all important in helping you work with the right trainer.

Consider asking the three questions below to prospective personal trainers, along with any others you find pertinent to your search process.

## ARE YOU CERTIFIED?

The National Commission for Certifying Agencies has decades of experience accrediting health and training professionals, so asking if yours is credentialed should be a critical part of your decision.

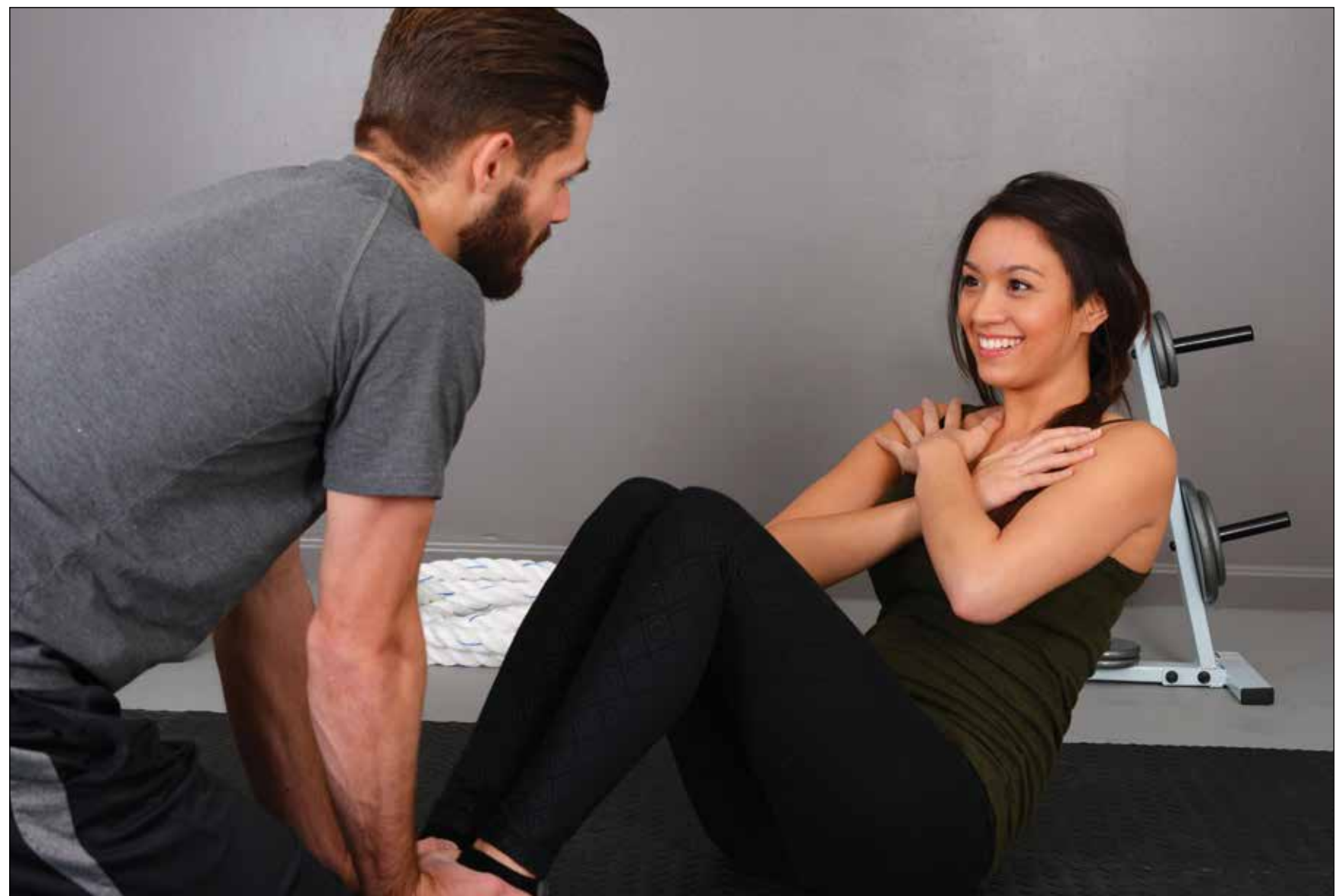
NCCA-certified trainers are knowledgeable and skilled to provide you with a safe and effective workout. Don't be afraid to ask to see a copy of a personal trainer's certification to ensure that it is current. You also can call a certification agency to verify a trainer's status.

In addition to a certification, a college degree in exercise science or a related field is an added bonus. More credentials should show you the trainer is committed to improving his expertise.

## HOW EXPERIENCED ARE YOU?

How many years of experience a personal trainer has working with clients is important to know. Does he or she have a background in the particular area you're looking to jump into?

If you have a medical condition,



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you should ask if the trainer has experience working with similar issues and how he or she would help you either overcome or compensate for the issue. These types of questions will give you a sense of how qualified a trainer is to help you reach your individual goals.

## CAN I HAVE SOME REFERENCES?

A trainer can tell you all about her abilities and credentials, but hearing from past and present clients can make or break your decision. Ask the personal trainer for names, phone numbers and even testimonials of other clients.

Once the trainer checks with his cli-

ents for approval, give these connections a call to ask about the professionalism and personality of your prospective trainer. Also inquire about punctuality, skill level and results. By doing your homework, you can ensure that you're making the right investment with your time and money.