

Age is no reason not to be fit

You are never too old or too out of shape to get fit.

You are also never too old to take part in a fitness competition.

I hope this inspires women and men over 40 to enter or at least set a goal to compete in a competition. Sharing my competition journey with as many people as I can is not for the purpose of bragging about my accomplishments but to encourage and motivate what I like to call the "prime of life" group to realize anything is possible if you set a goal and commit to it.

When I first thought of entering a competition, at age 45, it was simply to set a new goal. I needed something to work toward. On my first attempt, I simply picked a competition but didn't actually register.

I just needed a goal date to work toward.

It was what I called my practice run but was really my "I am too afraid to step on



MARLA ARNDT
fitness bootcamp

stage attempt."

A year later, at the ripe age of 46, I decided nothing ventured, nothing gained and sent in my registration fee to a regional fitness competition taking place three months later. I would not allow the fear of parading my body on stage in front of hundreds of people to stop me.

I followed a strict regimen of workouts and clean eating. I felt empowered. The mere thought of getting on stage in a crystal-

covered, teeny bikini and six-inch heels made me wonder if I was out of my mind.

When I stepped on Stage 12 weeks later, I knew I deserved to be there. I set a goal and followed through. I sculpted my body through training and proper nutrition. I looked better than I did in my 20s, 30s or early 40s. I was the strongest I had ever been mentally and physically. Starting at around age 40, most people lose nearly half a pound of muscle each year and gain the same amount of fat. While it's true that as we age we have to work harder than the young, a lot of the declines we attribute to aging may be reversed with fitness training. So, I ask: Are you out of shape and gaining weight because you are aging, or are you getting old because you are out of shape and gaining weight?

Research and many of us over 40 are proving that this doesn't have to be the case. Many of the declines with aging are because

of lack of use. The old saying, "Use it or lose it" is very true.

I don't plan on letting the years slow me down. I also believe I can train as hard as women half my age.

The human body, whether young or old, is a miraculous creation that will rise to meet challenges. Don't let age stop you from reaching your goals. It's just a number; muscle doesn't know age. I am just shy of my 48th birthday and will compete in The Fitness STAR Model Search in Toronto on April 11. If you're not ready to compete, come to see what it's all about. It may be enough to inspire you to become the best you can be.

Guelph-based personal trainer Marla Arndt owns and operates Frameworks Fitness Studio and can be reached via her website at www.frameworksfitness.com. Her column appears every other Friday.



ELLIE
advice

Let hubby have his coffee

Q: Though my husband and I both have jobs, there's never a guarantee in a recession, so he's looking to tighten our budget and not overspend.

I have a problem with him buying coffee every day. I make a pot in the morning and we both bring travel mugs with us. But at his work, staff takes turns buying a round from a coffee chain store. He says he can't get out of it, as it would look bad.

He also justifies it as a part of our entertainment budget.

I think \$10 to \$15 per week is a huge waste, and unfair to the family. Am I being unreasonable?

A: You're being unhelpful. Hubby has a long-standing "social" situation with his co-workers that you're negating, but he can't.

The \$10 to 15 weekly is not entertainment, but is a work-related food expense, like lunch.

If he weren't buying the round, would he still be buying for himself? Is a midday coffee a habit/stimulant he's not ready to give up?

Do you similarly have some inexpensive pleasures (chocolate? unnecessary cellphone calls?)

However, if you're both committed to cutting every expense possible, work with him on a way to suggest to his co-workers that they change the pattern.

Example: He could ask if others feel it's an "extra" they want to cut back, even reduce it to a once-weekly treat.

But don't push your man on this.

His workplace is his territory, not yours... and this is a relatively minor "extra."

CAREFUL WITH FARAWAY PAL

Q: I'm 24, never dated, but have been talking for three years to someone half the country away; he can't travel here, as he entered the U.S. illegally. I'm unsure if I should be the one to travel for us to meet.

He wants to marry. He seems very nice but anyone can say anything over the phone.

Should I just go? What's the worst that can happen?

A: Several "worst" possibilities: 1) He wants legal immigrant sponsorship through marriage to a U.S. citizen; 2) He's "talking" to several long-distance potential candidates, hoping to snare one; 3) He has a wife/girlfriend back home; 4) He's not at all the person you think, from your minimal contact and little experience.

Test him. Say you met someone else and now just want to be long-distance friends, you hope he'll keep calling.

If he continues to call, and you do visit, take time to know him.

Email Ellie: ellie@thestar.com

Camp shows girls they can excel in 'male-oriented' jobs

Melanie Patten

HALIFAX — Jocelyn Murphy's "Aha!" moment came about two years ago, some 30 metres above the ground.

Murphy, now 19, had just summoned all her courage to climb up a massive ladder as part of a camp that teaches girls what it takes to become a firefighter, police officer or paramedic.

"I was petrified climbing up," says Murphy, recalling the ascent to the ladder's final rung. "When I got there, it was like, 'oh my God, I'm on top of the world, literally and figuratively.'"

The experience at Camp Courage — a Halifax-based, eight-day program for girls aged 15 to 19 — helped the girl from Eastern Passage, N.S., realize she wanted to fight fires for a living.

Becoming a firefighter was actually a second career choice for Andrea Speranza, the camp's founder. Throughout her childhood, she dreamed of becoming Superman so she could help people.

As it turned out, that job was already taken. So, Speranza settled for the next best thing and began volunteering in the fire department.

It was during recruitment drives for Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency Services that Speranza noticed few women showed interest in the job she loved.

"I always did career fairs and no girls were coming up to the booth. Time and time again I'd ask, 'Why are you not coming up to this booth? It's an awesome job,'" says Speranza, 39, who's



Jocelyn Murphy poses with a fire truck at the Highfield Park fire station in Halifax.

BY MIKE DEMBECK, THE CANADIAN PRESS

been a full-time firefighter for nine years.

"Everybody would just say, 'I've never thought about being a firefighter, I've never seen another female firefighter.' And I thought that was kind of crazy."

And so, in 2006, Camp Courage was born.

Speranza says campers spend two days experiencing each profession first-hand. On paramedic days, the 24 girls are plunged into different medical scenarios and learn how to intubate talking mannequins and how to deliver a baby.

Reading blood splatters, fingerprint lifting — "CSI stuff," as Speranza puts it, are all part of police days.

On firefighting days, the girls put out fires, perform staged rescues and — Murphy's favourite activity — climb up a massive ladder.

The day camp is free, and teens interested in participating in this year's camp in July must submit an essay or produce a short video explaining how they can improve their community or the life of someone less fortunate. The girls must follow through on their promise.

Until she attended the camp, Murphy says firefighting never seemed within her grasp.

"When I went to the camp it was like, 'This is totally something that is a male-oriented career, but why do I — as a girl — have to sit back and have all the other guys go ahead of me?'" says Murphy, who just applied to become volunteer firefighter, and hopes to make it a career.

Even Speranza admits she almost didn't go through with pursuing her chosen career. Young women need to realize their dreams aren't foolish simply because they're not considered traditional, she says.

The Canadian Press

horoscope Friday

FRIDAY BIRTHDAY

This year, keep finances a key priority. Know that you are being smart, but do avoid being obsessive. Your options might be somewhat limited by a conservative streak.

♈ ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19)

What has been a bone of contention can be levelled out. Direct communication works, especially with a sensitive issue. If you get a strong feeling — especially financially — act on it.

♉ TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20)

Your smile finally has the impact you desire. Travel, long-distance communication and a renewed perspective mix. Be willing to adjust your plans. Something whispered could be significant.

♊ GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20)

Play the day low-key, with the exception of a child or younger friend. Be honest about your needs. If you must, deal with a difficult elder.

♋ CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22)

Friends let you know in no uncertain terms that they would like your company. The real question remains whether a key partner can let go of jealousy or a need to be possessive.

♌ LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22)

Others want your attention. Easily, you could be on overload. A demanding partner could only add to the pressure. Adjust your pace and be willing to change plans. Flexibility could make events and people easier to deal with.

♍ VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEPT. 22)

Take an overview and decide what will work best. Your creativity gives plans and people an infusion of happiness and energy.

♎ LIBRA (SEPT. 23-OCT. 22)

Togetherness is earmarked by excellent communication. Someone wants to be the apple of your eye and have your attention, no matter what.

♏ SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21)

Clearly others want you involved. Make it your pleasure to be involved. Share a favourite pastime or hobby.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Share more with a loved one or child. Talk about feelings and share a favourite pastime. It really doesn't matter what.

♑ CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19)

Honour your feelings and desires. You feel the beginning of spring, if not a case of spring fever.

♒ AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18)

Deal with familial and domestic matters. You might want to bypass another's demands and do more of what you want. A talk or phone call evokes very strong feelings.

♓ PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20)

You won't allow a situation to die down. Your fiery nature emerges in a conversation. Could you have been sitting on some anger?

Jacqueline Bigar is on the Internet at www.jacquelinebigar.com.

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