

Get Fit

By *LAUREN A. GOLT, Special to The News Journal*

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Jessica Perez, a licensed massage therapist, says that she fits the rest of her life into her workout schedule. *The News Journal*/FRED COMEGYS

Jessica Perez, 31, is a licensed massage therapist and owner of Total Massage Therapy in Wilmington.

She is also a part-time massage instructor at Harris School in Wilmington. Perez says that her passion for fitness carries into her massage practice. She strives to address each client's individual needs and limitations, including exercise, stretching and postural awareness, all of which are necessary for healthy tissue and muscles. For her own personal health, Perez, a Wilmington resident, exercises at least five days a week with yoga, strength training and karate. She also follows a mostly whole foods diet, eating organic when it's available.

What prompted you to start exercising?

My interest in exercise began in college, mostly as a means to shed some extra pounds. It started with strength training and then progressed to yoga. There were a few years in my mid to late 20s that I sort of became lax in my exercise routine, but I regained momentum in the last two years and have been more committed than ever. Now, my fitness regime consists mainly of strength training and a combination of yoga disciplines. And last summer, I added kempo karate to my practice.

What are you hoping to achieve?

My main goal is overall health and longevity. I want to feel as good as I possibly can every day that I'm alive.

What has been the best part?

The best part of exercising is how I feel as result of it -- strong, flexible and energized. I believe it's also fueled my immune system. Besides the occasional seasonal allergies, I rarely even get a cold.

What has been the toughest part?

The toughest part with any fitness regimen is fitting it into your schedule. But if you're doing something you enjoy, you'll make the time.

How do you find the time?

I make the time. These days, I fit the rest of my life into my workout schedule.

How do you stay motivated?

Seeing people older than me who are fit and healthy, living the kind of active lifestyle that I want to continue to live in my later years. It's proof that all the hard work is truly worth it.

What advice do you have for those considering a fitness program?

Find something that you like to do; otherwise, you probably won't continue to do it. Also, set short- and long-term goals for yourself, tracking your progress along the way. Seeing results, no matter how small, is the best motivator.