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From driving to Alzheimer’s disease to high blood pressure, there’s a lot that could be riding on your nightly routine.

12  Buying the perfect bike
Bikes should fit your riding habits, and the right accessories can be surprisingly helpful. Local expert Frank Pinto helps you navigate the basics.

18  How to have a great checkup
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22  Reach a little farther with these local races and runs
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Chef Soerke Peters, late of Basil and now of the Village Corner, shares a warming winter recipe that really highlights the flavors of its simple ingredients.
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Editor’s Note

Greetings!

You may wonder why there are firefighters on the cover. Well, every year around this time, many people get the idea they need to do a complete life makeover, trying fad diets and “cleanses,” and pushing themselves hard to get in shape at the gym. We heard firefighters have some pretty extreme workout routines, and by gosh, they do (just look at the size of those weights).

But you don’t have to work out like a firefighter to make your life better. And if you start off the New Year with unrealistic fitness goals for yourself, there’s a good chance you’ll give up.

To help out, we’ll have six great doses — er, issues — of Healthy Lifestyles in 2018, each with suggestions for reboots and tweaks — ways to make changes that will pay off in small ways or large over time, but which won’t leave you sliding back into your bad old habits.

For starters, we have a recipe for better eating, featuring a delicious low-fat vegetarian soup, plus advice on how to get better sleep. We’ll also let you in on the secret that pain isn’t necessary for a great workout, show you how to get the most out of your annual physical, and offer tips on choosing the perfect bicycle to hit the some of our fabulous local trails.

Read on. Then pick something and just start.

Kind regards,

Elaine Hess
Editor
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GETTING THOSE Z’s may be more important than you think. Your body systems all need regular, good quality rest to function properly. According to June Se-liber-Klein, a Monterey neurologist who specializes in sleep disorders, poor sleep has been linked to weight gain, mood problems, diabetes, high blood pressure and more.

She said that research shows that there’s also a correlation between sleep deprivation among workers who switch shifts frequently and cancer.

Lorinda Mazza, a nurse practitioner who works at CHOMP’s sleep disorder center, noted that there’s an increase in car accidents during and just after the fall and winter time changes. The Alzheimer’s Association says there’s a link between poor sleep and getting the disease.
Fortunately, there are many ways to improve the quality of your 40 winks. Mazza mentioned that your bed should be used for only two activities — sleeping and intimacy — otherwise you can come to associate it with working and your mind will continue to buzz all night long.

You’ve probably heard by now that limiting your exposure to screens — like your phone and computer — before bedtime is a good idea. The nonprofit National Sleep Foundation (sleep.org) says that although as many as two-thirds of adults fall asleep in front of the TV, the light from the screen may delay rapid eye movement, or REM sleep, the really deep part of the night’s cycle when you dream.

Why? Melatonin. It’s a hormone that tells your body it’s time to doze off, and it’s regulated by light. Ideally, you’d get some sun first thing in the morning to curtail melatonin production. Then, at least an hour before bedtime, step away from the screens and read a book or do something else relaxing.

The light from most lamps is a yellowish color, which doesn’t inhibit melatonin production like the blue light from other electronics. Nevertheless, Seliber-Klein recommends using a relatively dim light if you need to get up during the night to use the bathroom.

Lowering the temperature also signals your body that rest is near, so avoid exercising or hot showers too close to dozing off. However, having a warm bath or shower about an hour ahead of time so your body temperature drops afterward is helpful for some people.

While you think that nightcap will help, alcohol has a rebound effect — you may find yourself wide awake in the wee, small hours of the morning. Seliber-Klein said caffeine after lunch is a no-no if you’re trying to improve your rest, too, although she noted that some people are more sensitive to its effects than others.

Having dinner too late in the evening keeps many people up. A large meal that takes a long time to digest will almost certainly eat into your dreamtime. And if a post-supper cigarette or cigar is part of your routine, bear in mind that nicotine...
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THIS TIME of year is one of the best for locals. While there are a few big events — apparently there’s some golf tournament in February — beaches, trails and streets are relatively free of crowds. You can get a walk in without being poked by a selfie stick-wielding tourist.

You can also take a nice bike ride on Scenic Road, without worrying as much about a driver who’s paying more attention to their GPS than to what’s right in front of them.

What? You don’t have a bike? Well, that’s just crazy talk, especially nowadays when there’s one for just about every body type, lifestyle and riding preference. Just ask Frank Pinto, the owner of Work Horse Bicycles in Monterey.

When you walk into the shop, the array and variety of bicycles and related gee-gaws is nearly overwhelming. In fact, you may briefly long for the days when you walked down to the local toy store or department store, picked out a color you liked and decided whether you wanted a banana seat, a sissy bar or basket and tassels for the handlebars. Then you forked over the cash and went on your way.

However, Pinto said, the myriad options make it easier to find something suited just for you. The first thing he likes to do is ask questions — lots of them.

Question No. 1 is “What type of riding do you want to do?” Do you want to ride off-road? If so, are you picturing bouncing down hills at Garland, over rocky trails in the Sierra, or just on dirt trails or fire roads?

Maybe you want to cruise the rec trail a few times a week, or perhaps use your new purchase to commute to work. Pinto added, “Do you love to go fast? Are you looking for comfort or Tour de France speed?”

Finally, he said, he’ll ask how you’re going to get to the beginning of your route — do you want to be able to transport your bike in your Mini? And if you live at the
In his element at Work Horse Bicycles, Frank Pinto loves helping customers find just the right ride and accessories to get them on the road to fitness.

Getting the right size bicycle is as important as getting the right size pair of shoes.

At the top of Ocean Avenue, remember that what goes down, must come back up.

After gently bombarding you with this line of questioning, Pinto narrows the choices down to three candidates. The customer will check the fit (more on that in a minute) and take some short test rides to get the feel of each bike.

Pinto said getting the right size bicycle was as important as getting the right size pair of shoes. His smallest adult frame size suits someone 4 feet 11 inches, and he said that was significant, because petite women used to have to purchase a kid’s bike to get one that fit — and some of them really didn’t like that.

Whether you’re a man or a woman, Pinto will have you stand over the bike, straddling the seat. There should be about 2 inches of space between the top bar and/or seat and you. Then comes a check of what Pinto called “the cockpit” — the reach from the saddle, or seat, to the handlebars. This will vary not only based on rider size, but on whether the bike is built for sitting up straight or leaning forward.

Bikes built for sitting up straight are generally what are called “beach cruisers” or “café bikes,” meant for going about 3 miles at a time, from coffee shop to coffee shop. They typically look very old-school, with big seats and bright colors. Pinto said you could stretch that distance to 5 miles, but after that, they’re not very comfortable.

The saddle can be modified for height, and its angle is also adjustable. Perfectly level isn’t always best. Some people find more comfort with the front of the saddle, or “nose,” up, while others like it angled downward.

It’s also good to tell the person adjusting your bicycle if you have hip or knee problems, as well as back issues, so they can take that into account.

Once you’ve got the main item all picked out and adjusted properly, it’s accessory time. Pinto said you don’t have to buy everything, and certainly not all at once, but after a helmet, the next two basics, if you’re going to ride for more than 15 minutes at a
FOR ABOUT nine months now, I’ve been part of a weight-loss program with a weekly support group. Every Friday morning, we line up at three carefully calibrated scales and weigh in.

Now, unlike certain groups back in the day, no one will shout out anyone’s weight, the number of pounds lost — or, horrors, gained. It’s between my leader or one of her minions and me, unless I’ve hit a milestone, like 10 percent of my starting weight is gone or I’ve lost some multiple of five pounds. Then they’ll smile and quietly ask, “May we celebrate you today?”

May you?? Heck yes! Bring on the applause and the bling! I’m easy. The charms and star stickers given out as rewards are just as effective at 56 as they were when I was 10.

But I digress. There are five stages of a weigh-in, during which we all act as if we’re jockeys being checked out for the Kentucky Derby. In order, those stages are:

The rest room is referred to, without so much as an ounce of sarcasm, as “the weight reduction room.”

The Ceremonial Procession to the Scales
It’s kinda quiet. Almost no one’s eaten breakfast, and about half the group’s members are clutching full bottles of water or cups of coffee — or both. Despite being thirsty and caffeine-deprived, people are usually remarkably cheerful and friendly.

Everyone’s already emptied out whatever could be coaxed loose, so to speak. Still, even if you went at home, you go again once you arrive at the meeting. The restroom is referred to, without so much as an ounce of sarcasm, as “the weight reduction room.”

The Divestiture of Unnecessary Items
My necklace, which can’t possibly weigh more than an ounce or two? Gone. The key ring and purse, natch. Shoes? Check. Socks? Not wearing any. Please. Jacket? Done. If I’m wearing hair accessories, they come off, too.

Whatever the weather, I’m wearing the lightest-weight thing I could find in the closet. I once watched a woman take off a chiffon wrap that would have flown clear to Hawaii if a sea breeze had hit. I’ve worked out at the gym, and my hair has been blown bone-dry after my shower. I’ve never seen a wet head in that room.

Everyone waits in an orderly line, just out of earshot of the scales, as each person creates a unique pile of artifacts on the altar — I mean, counter.

My own (very svelte and athletic) sister, who belongs to a similar organization in a state that has very cold winters, once took off so much stuff before a weigh-in that the person behind her in line got impatient and demanded, “Will you be removing anything else?” You couldn’t blame him. He hadn’t had his coffee.

Gum chewers deposit the peppermint stuff in the trash.

“OK, I’m ready for you,” says Fearless Leader (or minion). I say a brief prayer that somehow the peanut M&Ms I consumed the previous day in the newsroom have magically passed through my body, no calories left behind.

Then I exhale. No, really.

The Mounting of the Scale
I wait for the digital numbers to stop bouncing around.

“OK, I got you,” says FL, in a cheerfully neutral voice, and
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life is on
is a stimulant.

Mazza and Seliber-Klein recommended “relaxing activities” before bed, including soft music, reading — but probably not the latest James Patterson thriller — and meditation, if you’re so inclined. Some things haven’t changed since you were 4 or 5, including the fact that consistent bedtime rituals promote sleep.

What if you wake up in the middle of the night? Mazza said that if it’s a brief period and you can go right back to sleep, go ahead. But once you’ve been lying there for more than about 20 minutes, it’s probably better to get up and read (not check your phone) or do something else relaxing. Staring into the darkness and willing yourself to sleep is usually counterproductive.

OK, what if you’re still nodding off midday? Mazza said that if it’s a brief period and you can go right back to sleep, go ahead. But once you’ve been lying there for more than about 20 minutes, it’s probably better to get up and read (not check your phone) or do something else relaxing. Staring into the darkness and willing yourself to sleep is usually counterproductive.

According to the National Institutes of Health, there are several kinds of sleep apnea, but the most common — and the one Seliber-Klein described — is called obstructive sleep apnea.

While people with the condition sleep, their airway collapses for as long as 30 or 40 seconds at a time. Since the body’s instinct is toward self-preservation, Mazza said, “It chooses breathing over sleeping.”

The person wakes up — but only for a matter of seconds — breathes, and goes immediately back to sleep. That’s why it often goes undiagnosed. In fact, Seliber-Klein said that often it’s a partner who notices that the person stops breathing on-and-off. Other times, the person’s body will “finally give up on sleeping,” and they’ll fully awaken.

If the person does manage to make it through the night without waking all the way up, they’ll be tired the next day, as if they haven’t slept at all. The only way to accurately diagnose a sleep disorder is to go to a sleep clinic, where the patient is hooked up to monitors that track eye movements, brain activity, heartbeat and a host of other things.

“We put electrodes all over the patient,” said Seliber-Klein. Then they say “nighty-night,” and collect information for the next eight hours. While it seems like taking an insomniac and sticking a bunch of wires to them would make it even more difficult for them to sleep, Seliber-Klein said that data is recorded every 30 seconds throughout the night and “some of that time the person’s going to drift off.”

There are many treatments for sleep apnea and other disorders. For example, continuous positive airway pressure machines, also called CPAPs, consist of a mask that fits over the nose and mouth and provides mild air pressure to keep the airway open. Again, it sounds counterintuitive that wearing such an apparatus would make sleep easier, but if you’ve ever known someone who started using one, they’ve told you how much it has changed their life for the better.

For some people, losing weight can help, as can various types of medical and dental appliances. In other cases, surgery to remove excess tissue may be required.

How do you know if you should see your doctor about sleep problems? If lack of sleep starts to interfere with your everyday activities, like getting work done, driving, or even just staying awake, it’s time to schedule a visit.
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- Foggy • Tired the next day

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Breathe Smart Sleep Smart
How TO HAVE A GREAT CHECKUP

By ELAINE HESSER

MAYBE IT’S been a while since you’ve been in to your doctor for a checkup, and you’re thinking about scheduling one to get the year off to a good start. Or maybe you’ve been avoiding it because you know you need to cut back on the chardonnay, get up off the sofa and get moving, lose a few pounds … something like that.

Dr. David Straface of Montage Medical Group in the Crossroads and nurse practitioner Terri Bilbro of Urgency Med, an urgent care and family practice in Ryan Ranch, both want you to have a relationship with your medical provider that lets you ‘fess up and face up to health issues without cowering in the corner.

“An annual visit gives both clinicians and patients a chance to interact and develop a relationship,” Straface said. It generally lasts longer than a focused visit — one where the patient is coming in for a specific problem or reason.

Bilbro said, “You should be able to talk to your provider about anything and everything. Sometimes people settle [for less], but part of being a professional is listening to what’s going on with a patient.”

She added that to her way of thinking, it should be perfectly acceptable for a patient to meet and interview someone before accepting them as their primary care provider.

Assuming you’ve found the right person for you, what can you expect in a checkup? Straface said that the visit will probably last around 30 minutes, although that may vary from practice to practice. There are age- and sex-specific tests that may be ordered (mammograms, colonoscopies, etc.), as well as blood work that may be done.

One new wrinkle is that the Centers for Disease Control want baby boomers to get a simple blood test for hepatitis C. According to the CDC, there are several good reasons — one, many boomers were prone to, shall we say, questionable lifestyle choices in their youth that allowed communicable diseases like hepatitis C to spread. Also, they grew up in a time before universal precautions and infection controls were implemented, and may have been exposed to the virus through a

You should be able to talk to your provider about anything and everything.
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If you were exposed to it, you may remain asymptomatic for decades, but it can lead to cancer and cirrhosis. Finally, unlike in the not-too-distant past, there is now an effective treatment for the disease.

A brief physical exam will also be conducted, noting, for example, a mole that might prompt a referral to a dermatologist. Vision is often tested, there might be a look inside your ears, and sometimes a brief cognitive exam might also be given.

Blood pressure, pulse, height, weight and respiration will be measured, and they’ll listen to your heart.

“You’d be amazed at how many people come in here in AFib and don’t even know it,” Straface said, referring to atrial fibrillation, a form of irregular heartbeat that requires treatment to prevent further complications, like a heart attack or stroke.

Straface said that vaccines, such as a seasonal flu vaccine, one for shingles, and maybe a Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis, or whooping cough) or a tetanus booster might be administered.

The whooping cough vaccine is especially important for grandparents and parents of newborns, as well as pregnant women, said Straface, so that they don’t catch the disease and pass it on to the baby. For the little ones, it can have dire complications, including pneumonia, convulsions, brain damage and even death.

The heart of the visit, however, is the communication between the provider and patient. Bilbro said it’s not uncommon for patients to hold their concerns in until the visit is almost over and then blurt them out. “If something’s worrisome, that should be the first thing to bring up — get it out of the way,” she advised.

Straface said one question to ask yourself is “What’s keeping me up at night?” You should also bring up big life changes, like loss of a spouse, loss of job or moving to a new home, that bring on stress.

In fact, said Bilbro, it’s good to bring up anything that’s changed since your last exam, whether it’s physical, mental or emotional. Things like unexpected weight gain or loss, tiredness, balance problems and other changes can all be signs of something that needs attention.

Reconciling your medications with your medical records — especially if you have multiple providers — is an important part of the conversation as well. Straface said it’s easiest if the patient brings in everything they’re taking in a bag, so that medical staff can see doses and the frequency with which they’ve been prescribed.

“Sometimes someone carries a list around in their wallet, but it’s outdated,” explained Straface. He added that non-prescription medications (like painkillers, for example), supplements and herbals should be included, as unexpected interactions are always a possibility.

Finally, there should be a discussion of lifestyle choices like smoking, drinking alcohol, nutrition and getting regular exercise. And there should be time for you to ask any lingering questions that are on your mind.

Then you can check it off your list and get on with that nice, relaxing walk. You were going to do that anyway, right? 😊
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SOMETIMES IT helps to have a goal when you’re trying to get fit, one that’s fun and that you can share with friends and family. The Monterey Peninsula is home to many races and runs to inspire you, from 1-mile fun runs and walks to marathons and triathlons.

Healthy Lifestyles has rounded up some of 2018’s best. Many of these sell out quickly, so if you don’t get into the event you want this year, it’s never too early to start training for the next one.

This year’s Rio Resolution Run is over, but there’s no reason to believe that runners won’t congregate again on Jan. 1, 2019, at the Rio

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Grill (which sponsors the race) to run the next one. If you’re into putting things on your calendar that long in advance, keep an eye on riogrillsresolutionrun.com.

Options include a 5K and 10K run through town, and “walkers, strollers and dogs on a leash are encouraged.” If you need more encouragement, the registration fee includes brunch from the Rio Grill.

For 2018, you have plenty of choices. The Big Sur International Marathon (bigsurmarathon.org) has spawned a whole family of events, year-round, beginning on the weekend of April 28-29. On Saturday the 28th, the By-the-Bay 3K is favored by local children, but grown-ups are welcome, too. The course is an out-and-back (as opposed to a loop) that starts and ends at Lovers Point.

On April 29, there are six races for which you can register. Of course, the Big Daddy of them all — the marathon — stretches 26.2 miles along the coast, with musicians to help motivate the runners along the way. There’s a 6-hour time limit, and strollers, dogs and walkers aren’t part of the picture. This is one serious, but gorgeous, road race.

The marathon relay is for teams of four people who each run legs ranging from 4.8 to 9.4 miles. There are also 21-mile, 11-mile, 10K and 5K courses.

Come Father’s Day, June 17, another BSIM event, Run in the Name of Love, offers either a 5K timed run or a 2K walk that can include your pet. The race is run in memory of the late Brian James Love, a Carmel resident who died in a snowboarding accident in 2005. He was secretly training to run his first marathon to surprise his mom, also a runner.

The courses start at Sunset Center and end at Ocean Avenue and Scenic Road. Run in the Name of Love raises money for Just Run, the Big Sur International Marathon’s fitness program for youth.

Want a change of scene? On August 4, the Salinas Valley Half Marathon — the inland member of the BSIM family — starts at 8 a.m., early enough to keep runners relatively cool. It begins at Soledad Mission and ends near Pessagno Winery, winding its way up the River Road wine trail, past vineyards and verdant fields of produce. No pets and no wheels (strollers, bicycles, roller skates, etc.) are allowed on the course. Go to salinasvalleyhalfmarathon.org for more.

BSIM’s closes each year with the Monterey Bay Half Marathon on Nov. 11, which starts at the...
CHANCES ARE you’ve been bombarded with information about health and fitness for several weeks now. The same marketing machine that ramped up sometime before Halloween, telling you to indulge yourself with giant peanut butter cups, candy corn and holiday-themed cocktails, has now switched gears.

There are more exercise gimmicks, gadgets and training plans out there than you can count. But what really works, and what’s just hype?

Healthy Lifestyles talked with Jenn Pilotti of Be Well Personal Training, who has a master’s in human movement and nearly 20 years of experience, as well as Arianne Bautista, owner of Carmel Barre, who has numerous certifications, including personal training and workouts using a ballet barre.

Both women said that one of the biggest myths they encounter is that you need to, as Bautista put it, “be dripping with sweat and gasping for breath” to get in shape. Pilotti said “People assume they should go from doing nothing to thinking, ‘I’ve got to do all of these things,’” meaning lots of aerobics, stretching, lifting, and so on. “Less is better than nothing,” she added.

“I feel like sometimes people are running in a hamster wheel, wearing themselves out and not getting the results they want,” Bautista said. She noted that you burn more fat when your heart rate isn’t pounding as hard as it can. “You don’t have to be in extreme pain or misery to reap the benefits of exercise. More isn’t always better.”

For example, Pilotti said, if you’re going to start doing strength training, start with one set of four repetitions of whatever exercise you’re doing, and work your way up to three sets of 10 repetitions. You can also break up the recommended 30 minutes of daily cardio into three 10-minute walks.

Pilotti answered another question about strength training. Is it better to lift free weights, like barbells, or to use the machines at the gym? Again, it depends on what you’re looking for. If you want to do something user-friendly and “not think too much,” as Pilotti put it, but still build strength, the machines are the way to go.

However, if you want your efforts to be more effective and build what weightlifters call a “mind-muscle connection,” free weights are what you want. “What the heck’s a mind-muscle connection,” you may ask.

It refers to concentrating on the muscle or muscles you’re working on strengthening. For example, if you were doing a bicep curl (imagine Popeye with a barbell in one hand, flexing), instead of thinking about washing the car later, you’d concentrate on making sure you were using the bicep and not swinging the weight around, or twisting your wrist in a way that could be harmful. This...
intersection of Del Monte Ave. and Camino El Estero in downtown Monterey, follows the coastline out to Asilomar and back, and returns to Custom House Plaza. On **Saturday, Nov. 10**, you can do the **PG Lighthouse 5K**, from Lovers Point to Point Pinos and back. There is also a 3K fun run that day, with the same starting point.

The **Big Sur Trail Marathon, half marathon** and **5-mile run** will be on **Sept. 12**, and is celebrating its 29th year. The course for all three races takes runners along the Old Coast Road for unique and beautiful views along with challenging hills.

The **Monterey Rape Crisis Center’s 33rd Together With Love 10K and 5K Run/Walk** is on **Feb. 11** at Lovers Point. Money raised goes to the center’s education programs. Teams, strollers, and kids are welcome, but pooches have to stay home. In addition to the grown-ups’ events, there’s a 1K fun run for the little ones at 8:15 a.m.

And if you’re planning your whole year, the festive **Jingle Bell Run** for arthritis is tentatively scheduled for **Dec. 8**. There are both timed and untimed 5K runs and a 1-mile Kids Elf Run.

If you need a bigger challenge, two popular triathlons beckon — the **PG Triathlon** will be on **Saturday, Sept. 12**, starting as always at Lovers Point, with both Olympic and sprint-(shorter) distance courses.

The **Wildflower Triathlon May 4-6** at Lake San Antonio and the surrounding area has expanded for significantly this year. There’s a new 10-mile trail run on Saturday, May 5, as well as a 5K evening run.

Sunday, May 6, a 10K race will take runners along the same course as the triathletes, who have choices of various combinations of distances for running, swimming and bicycling on Saturday and Sunday. Individuals and teams can participate. There will also be a stand-up paddleboard contest.

A unique feature of the Wildflower Triathlon will be the opportunity for participants to rent luxury tents or RVs (delivered to the site) for "glamping."

In addition to the events listed here, there are plenty of Turkey Trots, 10K and 5K races throughout the tri-county area during the year. You’re sure to find something to suit your fancy and motivate you to just get moving.
The right accessories, starting with a helmet and water bottle, can make all the difference on your next ride.

Buying some biking shorts. I know, I know — but hear me out. Actually, hear Pinto out. He said they prevent chafing, but more importantly, they have padding that will make your ride orders of magnitude more comfortable. They’re made slightly differently for boy-parts and girl-parts, and are intended to be worn without underwear.

There are dozens of other accessories, but bicycles from Work Horse (and many other shops) come with another important feature included in the price — one or two tune-ups. The first one from Work Horse is recommended after the break-in period, which lasts 30-60 days. At that point, cables and spokes likely need adjustment, and your “fit” might need another look, among other things. The second is at the end of the first year, when they’ll go over the bike again and make adjustments — and make sure you feel well taken care of along with your investment. ☺️
prints out a sticker for my journal, showing my starting weight, today’s weight and the number of pounds lost (or, horrors, gained) this week — to the tenth of a pound. And you laughed at my jewelry removal!

**Appropriate Emotional Response**

If I’ve lost a pound or two, this stage involves cheering, dancing and fist pumps. If I’ve gained, it involves self-recrimination about a potato chip I shouldn’t have even looked at earlier in the week.

Group leaders are great about not judging participants. If you went to a special party or dinner, or on a cruise, and went a little nuts, the first question is “Was it good?” or “Did you enjoy it?” No scolding, no “you shouldn’t have.” Just, “OK, let’s get back on track.” It’s very reassuring. Finally comes…

**The Guzzling of the Beverages**

Ahhhhhh … coffee, water, and maybe a banana, just for the heck of it. For the record, we all know that most of the nonsense that precedes a weigh-in isn’t as important as a steady, downward trend over several weeks or months. But we’re human, so we play the weekly game that keeps us motivated.

Is it worth it? More than 25 pounds and two sizes later, you bet it is. 😊

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This recipe’s got fiber, vitamin A and plenty of other great nutrients — with minimal added fat and no added sugar. A Spanish onion is a mild yellow onion; if you can’t find one, any mild or sweet onion will work. Tying up the clove, thyme and bay leaves in a piece of cheesecloth with a piece of cotton twine makes them easy to fish out. If you put the soup in a blender, work in batches and put a kitchen towel over the top to prevent splashing. Otherwise, an immersion (stick) blender works well. To decrease fat content even further, substitute low-fat Greek yogurt for the crème fraiche or sour cream.

**Butternut Squash & Ginger Soup**

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**Ingredients**

— Serves 2

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic peeled and smashed
- 1 large Spanish onion, peeled and diced
- 1 large carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 stem celery, peeled and diced
- 2 large butternut squash (about 4 lbs.) peeled, cubed, and seeded
- 2 tablespoons fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
- 2 whole bay leaves
- 1 whole clove
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 tablespoons crème fraiche or sour cream for garnish

Heat the olive oil on low and add the garlic till golden. Put in the carrot, onion and celery and let sweat for 5 minutes over low heat without getting any color. Add the squash and the rest of the ingredients through the sprigs of thyme. Add just enough water to cover the vegetables. Let it simmer slowly and add water as needed.

Once veggies are soft, take out the sprigs of thyme and bay leaves, and whole clove. Use a blender to puree the soup until smooth. You may strain it through a sieve or cheesecloth, but it’s not necessary.

Add salt and pepper as you desire. Serve hot and add a spoon full of crème fraiche on top.

*Bon appetit!*
CHEF SOERKE Peters was born and raised in a tiny town in Germany, and he chose his career at age 5, despite never having met a chef or eaten in a restaurant. When he was old enough, he finished a three-year apprenticeship and then went to Munich, and cooked in restaurants there.

He continued to work his way up through the ranks in kitchens in the United States, always using local ingredients from nearby farmers markets and vendors, just like his grandmother taught him. When he moved here and took over Basil in 2012, he continued the practice, in the process getting the restaurant a green certification for environmental friendliness — the first of its kind in these parts.

Now he’s moved on to the Village Corner, where he plans to eventually implement the same principles that brought him success, with the help of his partner, Amy Stouffer, and Chef Raimundo Perez, who will be staying on. In the meantime, he’s shared a recipe for some delicious and healthy winter soup.
focus — and maintaining the proper form to prevent injury — requires a little instruction from someone who knows what they’re doing.

Free weights are more effective for overall fitness because each time you lift them, you have to balance and engage more muscles than just the ones you’re focusing on.

Bautista also said that people tend to overestimate the number of calories they’re burning, thinking, “Oh, I’ve worked out, now I can eat that burger.” So, should you eat before a workout?

“It depends on the person and the time of day,” said Pilotti. “The first thing in the morning, a little bit of fuel is good. A little bit of peanut butter goes a long way.”

How about all those sports drinks, with electrolytes and vitamins? Pilotti said that they’re only helpful if you’re doing intense cardiovascular training or working out in hot weather. Otherwise, “water is a wonderful beverage.” She mentioned that, “As we age, we aren’t as aware of our thirst and don’t sweat as much,” so getting enough water is “more of a conscious effort.”

And whatever else you think about perspiring, you’re not “detoxing” from that five-course dinner with a half-bottle of wine last night. That’s what your liver and kidneys are for. Sweating just cools you down.

If you’ve belonged to a fitness center for any period of time — particularly in winter — you’ve probably heard this line, too: “I feel like I’m getting a cold. I’m going to go to the gym and sweat it out.”

OK, that doesn’t really work. And you’re likely sharing your illness with everyone at the gym, according to Bautista. Although she said at the tail end of a cold, it’s probably fine to get some exercise, she believes at the beginning, you shouldn’t add to your body’s burden of fighting the cold by exercising. Pilotti said that if you’re not running a fever, it’s probably fine to go ahead and do your normal routine.

The info-
mercials for the 7-minute routine that will “burn off all your belly fat,” or the miraculous piece of home gear that will give you thinner thighs and a perky butt are lying to you, too. Bautista pointed out that if there really were a magic bullet, someone would be getting very rich from it right about now.

Pilotti said that as you get stronger and build muscle, you will get more compact, but as she and Bautista both said, losing fat overall is the only way to get a tighter tummy or muscles like a Richard MacDonald bronze.

Bautista said one of the other mistakes she sees is that people skip stretching and as a result, can lose mobility and flexibility. Pilotti said that although the research is mixed on when to stretch, the best idea seems to be to do a little warm-up before getting into your routine (walking a bit before running, for example).

Then, when you’re finished, you can go into static stretches, where you hold a position for several seconds at a time.

Both women concluded by saying that finding something you enjoy, having fun and being consistent were the keys to making fitness a regular part of life. “Do a little more than yesterday, and you’ll be more fit than you were last week,” Pilotti said, summing up. Bautista said, “If you find a happy balance, working out becomes something you look forward to. Otherwise, it’s never going to last.”

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