

Getting fit after 60 (or at any age)

Written by Al McFarlane, Editor-in-Chief
Sunday, 19 August 2012 00:00



Editor's Note: Join me, Tyrone Minor and his team of master fitness trainers, and mental health expert, Dr. Darren Moore, Ph.d., for the Chizel, Inc., Fitness Training Clinics at Urban League Family Day, Plymouth & Penn, N., 1-5pm Saturday, August 25. Find out if getting a personal trainer is what you need to get in shape and stay fit. Our program, Getting Fit After 60, has tips for Getting Fit At Any Age. Call me if you need more information or to pre register for Free Fitness Clinics, 612-588-1313.

You may have heard me talking, on the verge of bragging, about wanting to get fit. Some of you may have seen the video trailer done by the incomparable Twin Cities filmmaker, Alaina Lewis. The video is called "Getting Fit After 60." It introduces a video blog documenting my commitment to changing my lifestyle, particularly my food regimen and my fitness regimen.

The idea is that at 64, I am deciding that if I want to live a long life, I need to be in better shape.

I started riding a bicycle last year. I was at the Minneapolis Urban League Family Day, coaxed

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into showing up on a bicycle by both my daughter, Batala McFarlane, and by my friends over at the Major Taylor Bicycle Club (MTBC). The Major Taylor people had been pushing me toward bicycling for a long time. I did the obligatory, "Yes, sure. Sure." But it never happened. Things converged when MTBC organizer, Anthony Taylor, delivered a bicycle to me at home the night before the Urban League Family Day last August. I rode Family Day. And boy, did I love it!

Having succeeded in getting me into bicycling, Batala next said I should get a fitness trainer. She was relentless.

"Did you call him? Did you call him? Did you call Tyrone Minor?"

Tyrone Minor owns Chizel, Inc. I interviewed him for the "Conversations With Al McFarlane" public policy program on KFAI FM 90.3. We talked about his vision and mission as a fitness trainer, and about me as his student, pursuing physical fitness for the first time earnestly, in the sixth decade of my life. The complete interview is archived at <http://feeds.feedburner.com/insightnews/conversationswithalmcfarlane>.

Here are excerpts of the interview:

Al McFarlane

I was maybe 40% committed to Batala's idea, sort of yielding to pressure from her. But when I started the training I got committed instantly and that is where I am right now, committed to making this happen. So first of all, thank you. I am over 60 and looking for guidance in getting physically fit. When I called you, what was your approach to helping me understand the importance of physical training and fitness?

Tyrone Minor

I start with saying that I am just one piece of the puzzle. It is really about a lifestyle. Physical training is one aspect of that. If you are looking to enjoy a higher quality of life, you absolutely need to be involved in your health. Physical fitness is one aspect of that.

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For you, I wanted to redefine what it means to be fit throughout your lifetime. As people age it really boils down to what I like to call functional fitness. That means having the strength to do the things that you need to do in life whether it is carrying groceries, doing chores or even being involved in recreational activities. As we age, we tend to think that we have to give up some of the things of our youth. Actually, we can continue to do the things that we have always done and the things that we enjoy as long as we take care of the body.

AM

My wife and I changed our food regimen to a plan called the slow carb diet. We eat lots of lean protein and lots of vegetables, but no fruit, no sugar, no carbs, except for one day a week. One day a week you can eat whatever you want.

I am having great results with the fitness training and the slow carb diet so far. I am really pleased with that and I am committed to continuing. So what are you observing in me and how can what I am doing, what you are teaching me, be elevated to instruction for our community?

TM

What I see in you reminds me of our childhood enthusiasm. You are what I call "all in"-- you are fully invested. You were discussing earlier how your daughter brought you along. You were reluctant at first. That is the experience of many people. I make the comparison to testing the water. If you run some bath water, you want to stick your toes in and see if it is too hot or too cold. That is usually people's experience with physical fitness. Because they have neglected their bodies for so long, they are reluctant to get started. They say to themselves,

"I have dug myself in such a hole that I can't get out." What ends up happening is either people start and do too much too soon and end up just quitting because they are not seeing the results, or they get injured.

But fitness is a process. What I have seen in you from day #1 is that you are committed to it. You came in and you wanted to work hard and you wanted to be pushed. I don't think you knew exactly how hard I was going to push you, but you definitely rose to the challenge. You know with my personal training and the way I do things I change it up. By changing the workout, I make sure that the person is stimulated mentally and physically.

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I have seen you not only be fully invested with your own training, but because you are so invested, you are seeing the results. Now I see that enthusiasm being spread out to the community. It is basically like you have unlocked a secret and now you are trying to share it with the community.

I love a person who wants to work hard. That makes my job easier. My job is to make sure that they are safe and that I motivate them.

With many, many clients the biggest thing is motivation. You are one of the easier clients to work with because you bring the motivation. I just have to bring the heat. I bring a challenging and stimulating workout that is age- and fitness-level appropriate. I am thrilled with the results that we have seen so far together as a team. I am looking forward to where we can take this.

AM

Tyrone, you have been a competitor forever. You got into the fitness training after a stellar athletic career both in Minnesota and around the globe. You set track and field records in Minnesota that haven't been broken yet.

TM

It's kind of humbling for you to talk about my accomplishments. I started out as a football and track athlete in high school and fortunately for me I was able to take my track talent to a whole another level. I ended up competing nationally and internationally in track, was a full scholarship athlete first at Drake University in Des Moines and then later at University of Minnesota.

Here is where my experience differed from many others. We have plenty of talented people in track and field. In a sport like track and field, where there is not necessarily a professional level, you have to make a decision after college about what you are going to do with your career. For me, it balanced it out. I continued to compete doing my own training and I was able to take it to another level until I ended up qualifying for the Olympics trials in the 100 m, and went to the Nationals multiple times in the long jump. I still hold numerous conference and section records.

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We (St. Paul Central) were State champions in track and field, my senior year in high school. Actually, I believe we were one of the last urban champions in Minnesota history, and definitely in Saint Paul history.

So for me being fit and active has always been a part of my life. As I transitioned out of my own career, I wanted to share my experiences of being fit and active and what that can do for you. That is how I started Chizel, Inc.

AM

So what is the mission of Chizel, Inc.? What is the vision?

TM

It is to have people reach the pinnacle of their physical fitness in a way that will translate into other aspects of their lives. I think of it as a triangle. Physical fitness goes along with being mentally sharp. And then there is a spiritual component. Physical fitness is one piece of that triangle, one corner, so to speak. All of them work together and are necessary to be totally healthy.

AM

What have been the defining moments in your life that sort of made you who you are?

TM

In my neighborhood, there was a sense of competitiveness even in grade school. We pushed each other. I don't know if there is one defining moment for me. I grew up with a lot of extremely talented athletes.

Where I did differ, though, was that I had that internal fire. I am a competitor.

So if someone was on my level, I wanted to make sure that they didn't stay on my level. I worked to get better and be better. For me, winning is good. I won a High School State championship my junior year. Some might win and become complacent. But I knew that winning meant there was a target on my back. That meant I knew I had to work harder.

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I look at my training business the same way. I look at what other trainers are doing and if those people are close to me, that means I need to step my game up because I want to be a State champion. I want to be that premier training service.

There is a saying in sprinting when a person that is really fast and can continue to get faster as the race goes on. They say "if we are even, I am leavin'." That is how I feel. If I am even with you then that means I am about to leave you, I am going to take off on you.

AM

The competitiveness you are describing is not a question of tripping the other guy up. You are saying you are simply being yourself and your propensity is to win, to excel and to cross the finish line. How do we foster that attitude as the defining character of our community.

TM

The fact that you are going public with your experience is great on many levels. One of them is there is accountability on your part. I mean you are putting yourself out there. So now you are going to have to make sure that you are going to stay on your game but also now you have broadened that support system that you have.

For many people, the support system is very important in keeping them on track with their fitness goals, even life goals, I am looking forward to Minneapolis Urban League Family Day because I am going to redefine what fitness is and what it means to be fit is.

TM

You can reach me at www.chizelinc.com and you can also call me 612-916-0930 or email at info@chizelinc.com