



## Does your six-pack overflow?

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As we pulled into the parking lot of the local YMCA last week, the sight of so many cars took us by surprise. Each week since the end of summer we've been there, at least five-of-the-six in my family — that would be minus me — shows up for swim team, lessons or a class of some sort.

But this was the week on the tail end of the holidays, and that means, I could only surmise, that so many people had made that annual resolution that, yes, they would finally commit to getting in shape.

Inside the Y, I was overwhelmed by the throngs of people moving from the pool to the exercise room to the various classes held in the evenings. I stood in a sort of daze, looking around, slightly self-conscious in my own workout garb as I made my way up into the exercise room.

"It happens like this every year," a man said to me, noticing that I was sizing up the room. "Right after the New Year, they come and by March they're gone again."

I smiled that sort of forced smile I had learned from my mother so many years ago. It's a nervous smile that can be followed by an equally nervous laugh, but I thought better of the laugh and ran right to an exercise machine. I'm not comfortable with group exercise environments and the small talk that can go along with it.

The machine, a cross-country-skiing-motion-machine thingy — is that what they call it? — stood there empty, but no flashing lights appeared to be working and I thought it was off.

"Is that machine working?" I asked one of the trainers in the room as I looked for an on-off switch.

"You have to get on and start moving before it comes on," he answered politely.

Of course, I thought, you have to start working out before it works. That makes sense; nothing really works unless you work it, after all.

I spent 10 minutes working up a sweat before I moved to a series of weight machines. I know the Y has people who can help you get started on these things, but I didn't want to get found out, lest I get caught bailing on this exercise thing come March.

So I examined each machine and was lucky to find that signs pretty clearly explain what part of the body each machine benefits and just how to get started. One — two- three- four and so on like that I did the repetitions, taking great satisfaction that I was burning something, but I'm not entirely sure what because, well, I've never been much for this sort of thing.

I managed to put in 30 minutes before I retreated to the family room for a game of pool with my daughter while I watched my five-year-old boys scale the tall climbing wall with great ease. I could feel the burning in my various muscles, and that left me somewhat satisfied that, indeed, I might make it past March if only I would commit myself to a regimen. Yet regimens are not something I take to well, and perhaps neither do most of the other people filling the parking lot. Come March, I suppose we'll see just who the last man standing really is.

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