

Graphics: Vecteezy



Joy Bennett, a member of Valley Praise Church in Harlingen, admits there was a point in her life when she allowed herself to gain weight, neglected her health and became depressed.





Then, her faith greatly influenced her decision to start living healthy.

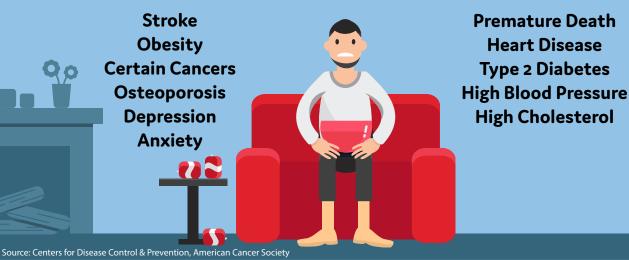
She describes the congregation at Valley Praise as an active community that does walking, running, cycling and even plays softball, all inspired by their faith.

Joy says it's important to get encouragement and motivation through a like-minded community, which in her case was her church.

"I broadened my horizons, took-up some exercise programs and felt healthier and stronger," Joy said. "It was amazing how I was able to be more confident not just in myself but in my faith."

NOTE: While not everyone belongs to a faith community or even believes in religion or higher power, studies have shown that some people's health can benefit from the added support and motivation faith-based groups can provide.

Risks of Not Being Active



HEALTHY RECIPE: SAUTÉED SPINACH AND CHICKPEAS

INGREDIENTS:



1 tablespoon canola oil 1 medium onion, chopped 1 cup of chopped spinach 1 can (8 oz.) tomato sauce 2 cups water 1 can (15 oz.) chickpeas, rinsed and drained 1/4 teaspoon of salt 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

PREPARATION:

1. In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté for 2-3 minutes, or until tender. Add the spinach and sauté for an additional 2 minutes.

2. Reduce the heat to medium-low, stir in the remaining ingredients, and cool, half-covered, for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the sauce thickens. Serve immediately.

How do I improve my social support network?

Meet new people By attending church, community events or volunteering

Let go of unhealthy ties Use your judgement and let go of negative relationships



Take care of your relationships Keep in touch with your support networks and support others when they need it.

The biggest advantage to approaching a fitness program as a spiritual practice is that it connects you with others who support your efforts to improve your health.

Source: Here to Help