

Choosing To Be Fit

PREFACE

At the age of 68, I was hit with a wake-up call that forced me to take a serious look at my own level of fitness. I was planting some herbs in the garden at our new house, and because I was at the top of a steep terrace on a narrow stretch of ground, I had to squat deeply to plant them. When I finished planting, I tried to stand up and found I couldn't. I didn't have the strength in my legs or the balance to stand up. I sat on my butt and cried. I hadn't realized the toll that prolonged stress had taken on my strength and vitality, and I was devastated.

My partner Greg and I had been going through an extremely stressful period for several years and I had repeatedly adopted my traditional dogged approach to get through it. You may know this approach under its common name of denial. My mental, physical, and emotional fitness levels were being seriously compromised, but my denial prevented me from seeing how serious the impact of all that continued stress was. Sitting there stuck in the mud and crying in my garden finally got my attention. This was the beginning of my own fitness journey, and the beginning of this book.

This business of starting over was not new to me. Twenty-two years ago I lost my health, my career, in essence my life as I knew it, and had to find my way back to good health and a full life. No one knew what was wrong with me, as they didn't have a name for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in 1990, nor did they have a clue about how to help someone who had it. I had to take responsibility for healing myself, and I did it by researching, experimenting, and writing about it. The result of that adventure became my book *Choosing to Be: Lessons in Living from a Feline Master*.

However, this time my challenge was different. I knew from my prior experience in learning how to heal from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome that I could only get well by embracing a body-mind-spirit approach. But CFS had been a wellness recovery journey. My new adventure was a fitness journey that encompassed a broad range of topics, some of which I knew little about. As I plunged into my research, I often felt like I was treading water without a lifejacket in a vast and turbulent sea of information,

exhortations, and contradictory opinions. The only thing I could do was to pick a few areas and begin to experiment with them. And so my learning began.

As I struggled with figuring out how to make changes I could stick with, I encountered many setbacks. Some were caused by injuries and illness. Sometimes I chose programs or teachers that were wrong for me. Sometimes I took on too much rather than breaking things down into smaller steps. There were numerous occasions when I had to climb out of the ditch of discouragement. But I climbed out . . . and persisted.

Choosing to Be Fit is the result of my research and experiments. It is a narration of how I brought myself back to a level of vitality and fitness I had lost along life's eventful and sometimes stressful path. It is also an often humorous story about one woman who learns the hard way that smaller is better when it comes to change. As you follow my journey, it is my hope that you too will find a softer, gentler way to get fit, one small step at a time.