EXERCISE: HEALTHY HABIT OR ADDICTION?

DO YOU...

☐ Prioritize exercise over all other commitments?
☐ Keep training even when injured, ill or tired?
☐ Feel angry or threatened when your exercise routine is interrupted?
☐ Feel anxious or guilty if unable to exercise?
☐ Double up on workouts if one was missed?
☐ Obsess about training details?

Exercise is considered to be both physically and psychologically beneficial for one’s health, but exercise without limits can become addictive. Differentiating between addictive and healthy exercise behaviors is difficult but there are key factors in determining which category you may fall into.

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

When exercise becomes an addiction it takes a toll on a person physically, mentally and emotionally. Much like substance dependency, the obsessive qualities of an exercise addiction can cause you to sacrifice your attentiveness to family, friends, studies or work. You may miss out on social opportunities or neglect important obligations. Your body takes a beating too, especially when you’re working out with a stress fracture, become dehydrated or experience extreme fatigue.

BUT I AM AN ATHLETE...

It is true that a healthy athlete and an exercise addict might work out similar amounts, so measuring your risk is about attitude and the amount of time you spend thinking about exercising. It is not healthy when you stop engaging in other activities or spend a major portion of time planning for the next trip to the gym. Healthy athletes and their coaches/trainers understand the importance of rest, recovery periods and adjusting for injury when necessary. Talk to your trainer if you feel she/he is encouraging a workout regimen that is too intense.

HOW DO I GET HELP?

Exercise addiction is closely associated with other disordered eating practices. The campus health center, athletic department, fitness center and counseling center are good places to find resources to deal with exercise addiction. You can also complete a confidential eating disorder screening at www.mybodyscreening.org. For additional education or support, visit the Multiservice Eating Disorder Association (MEDA) website at www.medainc.org or call the MEDA National Helpline: 866-343-MEDA.

Stay positive! While overcoming an addiction is never easy, you can take steps toward recovery.