

Building a Fit Family, One Day at a Time

By Elizabeth Eisenstadt-Evans



No more excuses. If Ed, Tracy, Riley and Ryan Lewis can find time for family togetherness and physical fitness, so can you. The Lewis', our PhillyFIT Family of the Month, have a schedule that would challenge even the most ebullient exercise fanatic. Both are Philadelphia police officers. She's got a day job, but he works alternate days and nights, making settling into a routine almost impossible.

Daughter Riley is nine, but her sister Ryan is only one year old, so the Lewis's need childcare when they want to exercise together. Instead of letting the difficulties of fitting in time for exercise discourage them from making the effort to go out to the gym or on a group bike ride, the Lewis's have taken advantage of their local YMCA and what it offers to develop a discipline that works for them.

Tracy and Ed Lewis have been a team since 2000. It's an archetypal East meets West story: she was assigned to the ninth district (Center City East) and he to the sixth (Center City West) when they worked together on a crime that occurred on the Broad Street dividing line. Now Tracy works as the Ninth District's Victim Assistance Officer, while Ed is on patrol in the Sixth District. They live in Northeast Philadelphia near the Franklin Mills Mall, but make it a point to take the kids and explore the local countryside as often as their busy schedules permit.

"We aren't ones to sit in the house," says Ed, thirty-five, who grew up in the neighborhood where they live now. One gets the sense, from talking to both Tracy and Ed Lewis, that it is in part her drive and enthusiasm that fuels her family's regular trips to the gym.

Ed Lewis, who has lost about thirty pounds by combining working out with Weight Watchers, teases his wife that, "It was more fun to be fat."

Tracy says she doesn't always feel like being "the motivator"—it's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it. Her commitment to fitness and a healthy diet helped her to lose twenty pounds, although she admits that she slacked off a bit while pregnant with Ryan.

According to Tracy, her dedication was sparked ten years ago, when she started classes at the Police Academy. "I worked hard to get up to par, but when I did it, it stuck with me that I could do that."

Observing that young Riley had a real love for the water, and fearing for her safety if she didn't learn to swim, Tracy enrolled her for swimming lessons at the Y. When Riley was occupied learning the backstroke, her mother had a chance to work out in the fitness center. It wasn't long before she was organizing her gym schedule around Riley's swimming lessons. Now Riley is on the swim team, and both Ed and Tracy are using that time for classes like Body Pump, in which you work out with a group, but can use the weights appropriate for your own, individual level.

Even with an extremely busy schedule, the family tries to get to the gym, or exercise outside, five days a week. Although baby Ryan is a little young for the swim team, nine-year-old Riley is a huge Y fan.

"I like hanging out with my friends at swim class," she says. "The coach is really nice." When she turns ten, mom and dad will take Riley to the



The Lewis Family at the Philadelphia YMCA.

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Fitness Center with them.

Both Tracey and Ed admit that they aren't perfect-both have occasional lapses. They are however, very pleased, both at the results of their commitment to fitness, and at the fact that exercising together has brought them closer to each other. Most important to both of them is the idea that they are serving as role models for their daughters. "I don't need to be thin or cut like Brad Pitt," says Ed, "But if we can be active, and show our daughters what a healthy lifestyle is, that's better than anything." And who could disagree?



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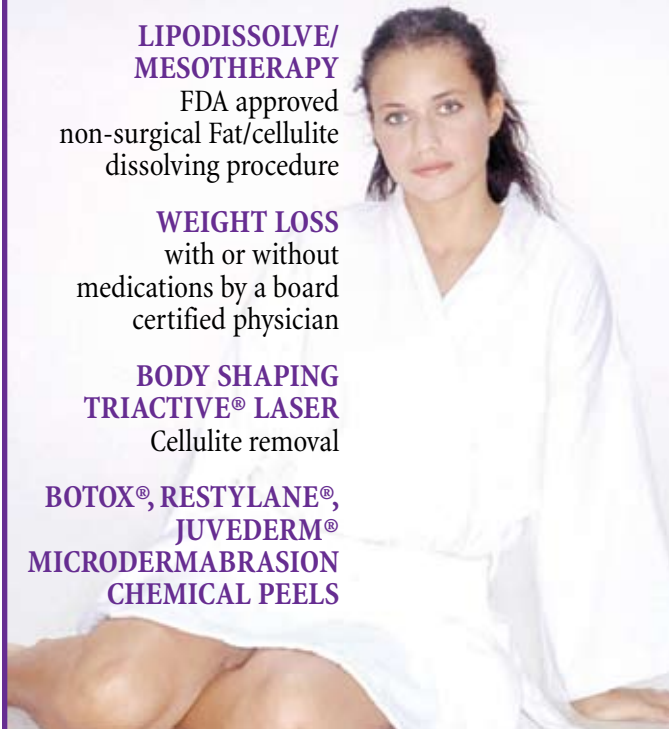
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