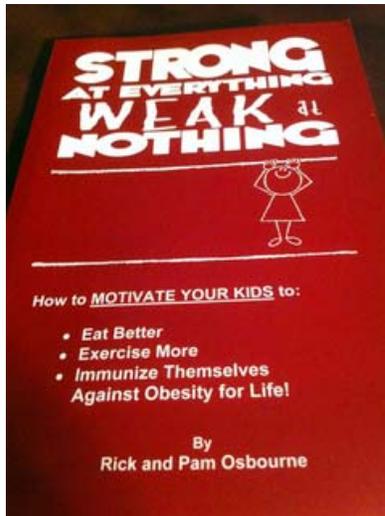


Regimen may have powerful impact on kids health

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Operation Pull Your Own Weight is explained in Rick Osbourne's book, "Strong at Everything, Weak at Nothing," written together with his wife Pam.

As many of you know, I've been writing and talking about obesity and childhood obesity for more than a decade. Teaming up with Forward — a dynamic, multi-faceted organization (Forwarddupage.org), to conquer childhood obesity in DuPage County — I've been pushing my Let's Get 'Em walking initiative with enthusiasm and vigor as a great approach.

Recently, I've been introduced to a most innovative, well thought-out program called Operation Pull Your Own Weight, created by Rick Osbourne, a coach of various sports at all levels and physical education teacher for almost 20 years. The program is well explained in Rick's book, co-authored by wife Pam Osbourne, "Strong at Everything, Weak at Nothing." The book addresses how to motivate your kids to eat better, exercise more, and immunize themselves against obesity for life. In 1995, Rick co-authored with ex-Bears athletic trainer Brian McCaskey "Pull Your Own Weight," a book about training for strength and fitness with your own body as resistance. Exercise such as pull-ups, push-ups and bar dips are examples of this concept.

The prestigious American Society of Exercise Physiologists endorses "exercises in which the participant's own body weight is the primary resistance" — the point being that a person's performance automatically improves with the loss of body fat, and decreases with the gain of weight, thus establishing an excellent measuring tool to mark progress.

This information has led to new terminology — FATS (Functional Acid Test), new to the childhood obesity challenge. The society endorses Operation Pull Your Own Weight as a great example of something that can suggest a child choosing one of these challenging body weight exercises as their own functional acid test and learn to master it. A gradual, “everybody succeeds” progressive method of measurable results.

The Osbournes write about the major importance of motivation in their program. Rick mentions, “the initiation of the Pull Your Own Weight ideas were based on increasing children’s self esteem. Everybody wins; everybody wants to be strong, not weak.”

Rick and Pam also point out that “one of the big misunderstandings of Operation Pull Your Own Weight is that people think we’re talking about an exercise regimen with which obese kids can burn calories and lose weight. Not the case. What they need to understand is that above everything else, the program is a measurement tool that is designed to motivate kids to do the things to avoid obesity for life.

Rick was a guest on “The Sports Doctor” on Thursday, and you can hear about this excellent program by going to sportsdoctorradio.com/radio_shows.html. Also, you can check out pullyourownweight.net for details.

Even the youngest kindergarten children can learn to successfully do leg assisted pull-ups. I’m looking to combine the program with Let’s Get ‘Em Walking to deliver a 1-2 knockout punch to childhood obesity over a generation, increase our children’s health, fitness, and self-esteem and save our country billions of dollars in obesity-related health care costs.

In conjunction with the multifaceted programs of groups like Forward, with creative CEO Ann Marchetti, and their partnership with the YMCA and countless other groups, we can win this battle. These efforts, reaching all the way to the White House and first lady Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” program initiative, are what’s going to make the difference. So school officials, teachers, coaches, educators, parents — pull your own weight and let’s get ‘em walking.

Dr. Robert Weil is a sports podiatrist from Naperville with an office in Aurora. You can hear him on his weekly radio show at 6:30 p.m. Thursdays on 90.9-FM. Contact him at drweilsportsdoctor@yahoo.com and visit sportsdoctorradio.com.