Several studies have explored the relationship between physical activity and the overall quality of life. In 1996, the Surgeon General's Office released its Report on Physical Activity and Health. This report reviews the evidence relating physical activity to reduced risks of a variety of health problems. Evidence shows that physical activity is related to a lower risk of premature development of many health problems such as anxiety, arthritis, back pain, cancer, depression, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, insomnia, lung disease, memory problems, and osteoporosis. Through physical activity, we can improve our quality of life by preventing or delaying development of health problems.

THE FIVE PRINCIPLE PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF FITNESS

▶ CARDIOVASCULAR ENDURANCE

This is an important component of physical fitness. When your muscles need oxygen, your aerobic (cardiovascular) system must be able to efficiently deliver it to them. When your body has waste products that need to be expelled (e.g. carbon dioxide and metabolic waste products), your heart-lung complex must be up to the task. These two tasks form the functional basis of aerobic fitness.

▶ STRENGTH

This is your ability to exert musculoskeletal force against an external object, such as a barbell, the ground, or an opponent, and it stems from four main sources: structural, physiological, psychoneural, and environmental factors. A lack of adequate muscular strength in conjunction with a decrease in bone density is a definite health concern of our general population and can lead to a decrease in our musculoskeletal functions. Strength developed through resistance training helps to develop our musculoskeletal system, which is what gives us the ability to physically move using our muscles and bones.

▶ SOUND NUTRITION

This is the consumption of food that provides your body with all the nutrients it needs to remain healthy and active. The six major nutrients necessary for a healthy body are: carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water. A deficiency in any one of these nutrients can reduce your chances of success in reaching your fitness goals. Considerable data indicates that ***the safest and most effective way to accomplish weight control is to combine sensible eating habits with a program of sound exercise that includes both aerobic and weight training.***

▶ FLEXIBILITY

This is the ability to flex, extend, or circumduct the joints through their full intended range of motion. The term "flexibility" actually refers to the mobility of your joints and how muscles, ligaments, tendons, or other soft tissues affect it – not to the "suppleness" of those soft tissues themselves. How much flexibility do you need? Although the answer varies from individual to individual, it can safely be said that you need enough flexibility to meet the demands of your daily activities with ease, plus a little bit more to spare for life's little emergencies (e.g., falling on ice, tripping, etc.). It is important to remember that flexibility and strength training programs must occur concurrently. Significantly improving your joints' range of motion without also improving the strength of your surrounding musculature (especially at its new range of motion) can be an invitation for injury.

▶ POSITIVE ATTITUDE

This may seem like a mental component of fitness, but this element of physical fitness is the most important of all! Adopted from the Native Americans, the points of the YMCA triangle stand for "mind," "body," and "spirit." All religions in one way or another recognize the importance of this Mind-Body-Spirit link. To realize your full potential, it is necessary to focus on your overall happiness with life and the healthy lifestyle choices that you make everyday.

For a detailed, professional, hands-on approach to developing an individualized fitness training program that is right for you, be sure to book a consultation session with a certified personal trainer.

ABOUT ISSA

The International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA) has been the world leader in fitness education and certification since 1988, providing education and certification to over 130,000 people in 85 countries. ISSA is the industry-leading first organization in the U.S. to receive accreditation by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), which is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency, and is a recognized member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

ISSA offers certificate programs, dozens of continuing education courses, and an Associate's Degree in Exercise Science with an Emphasis in Personal Training. Please visit **www.issaonline.edu** *to learn more.*