

STARTING STRONG, FINISHING STRONG

Sticking with simple, easy-to-implement steps, you will greatly increase your chances of maintaining superior physical and mental function throughout life.

An interview with Drs. Kenneth & Tyler Cooper

Dr. Ken Cooper is a man on a mission. The internationally recognized "father of aerobics" has logged in some 38,000 running miles, authored numerous "run-away" bestsellers, conducted rigorous research studies, and, perhaps most important, inspired millions to exercise.

And at 76, Cooper just keeps on going. One of the fastest-talking and hardest-working leaders in the field of prevention, the good doctor harbors no plans on slowing down. In fact, he's opening a new chapter, collaborating with his son, Dr. Tyler Cooper, on Cooper Life, a health and wellness residential community, and promoting his latest book, *Start Strong, Finish Strong*, that the dynamic father-son doctor duo recently authored.

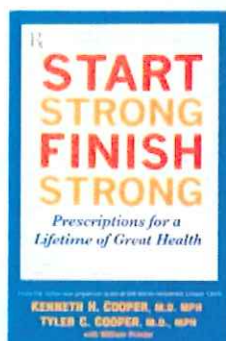
During 13 years of service in the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force, Dr. Ken Cooper served as a flight surgeon and director of the Aerospace Medical Laboratory in San Antonio. With aspirations of becoming an astronaut, the young physician helped NASA create a conditioning program to prepare astronauts for space and in-flight exercise systems used on board spacecraft. Cooper also developed the 12-minute and 1.5-mile fitness tests and the Aerobics Point System—tests in use today by military organizations, athletic teams, law enforcement agencies, and schools all over the world.

"It is easier to maintain good health through proper exercise, diet, and emotional balance than it is to regain it once it is lost," stresses the cardiovascular expert, who in 1968 introduced the word "aerobics" into the wellness lexicon.

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*Dr. Ken Cooper has authored 19 books translated into 41 languages and Braille with more than 30 million copies sold. Drs. Ken and Tyler Cooper joined forces and released their first ever title, *Start Strong, Finish Strong*, as a father-son team.*



"The overwhelming weight of scientific evidence demonstrates conclusively that abandoning a sedentary lifestyle and following a moderate exercise routine will greatly reduce your risk of dying from all causes—and enhances your chance of living a longer, more active life."

The bedrock principle stems from personal experience.

While water-skiing at age 29, Cooper thought he was experiencing a heart attack. Fortunately, he was wrong. Unfortunately, he was out of shape. While in medical school, the former Oklahoma high-school track star hit the books instead of the running path and ballooned from a lean

164 pounds to 204. The event inspired him to strap on running shoes and hit the road. One year later, Dr. Cooper crossed the finish line of his first long-distance race—the Boston Marathon. Before publication of his bestseller *Aerobics* in 1968, only 100,000 people were jogging in America. That number is now more than 30 million strong.

Who could have guessed that the young Air Force physician would set the pace for a worldwide fitness revolution?

Four decades later, Cooper remains an outspoken advocate for shifting medicine away from primarily disease treatment to disease prevention through aerobic exercise and overall lifestyle modifications.

The Cooper Aerobics Center in Dallas—made up of ten health companies and the nonprofit Cooper Institute—

serves as home base for Cooper's tireless passion for fitness, where he sees patients daily and oversees extensive research into heart disease and risk factors affecting heart disease and fitness. With the help of son Tyler, Cooper recently expanded his vision by adding a second Cooper Aerobics Center at Craig Ranch in McKinney, Texas, where Cooper Life is breaking new ground.

Additionally, Dr. Cooper was instrumental in passing legislation in Texas to combat childhood obesity by restoring physical education in schools through the passage of a new law that requires enhanced PE activity levels and annual physical fitness testing.

Although he retired his jogging shoes, Dr. Ken Cooper is a testament to the benefits of lifelong fitness, remaining an avid skier and race-walker. The *Post* spoke with Drs. Ken and Tyler about future and ongoing ventures at the Cooper Aerobics centers.

Post: What is the essential message of *Start Strong, Finish Strong*?

KC: I have always said that my goal in life is to "square off the curve"—live a long, healthy life and then die suddenly like my mother and father did. You can "square off the curve" of life by enjoying your greatest possible levels of strength, stamina, and mental

acumen right up to your final breath. My father was a dentist in Oklahoma for 50 years. After practicing dentistry all day on a Friday, he died on Monday—he squared off the curve. My mother voted in the presidential elections in 1984 then went home to watch the election returns. We found her the next morning stretched out on the sofa with the television still on. She was wearing a lapel pin that read, "I voted today." She lived in her own home, drove her own car, and was totally independent. In this way, both parents squared off the curve. While I'm not talking about retiring, one of these days I'll square off the curve. Tyler is now the president of Cooper Life and doing a good job.

TC: I grew up in a healthy environment. During my medical training, I tried to convey the message that it doesn't take much effort to get in shape. Doing 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise three times a week coupled with minor changes in diet can reap huge benefits on overall health. In short, healthy habits do not require Herculean effort to realize dramatic improvements in health.

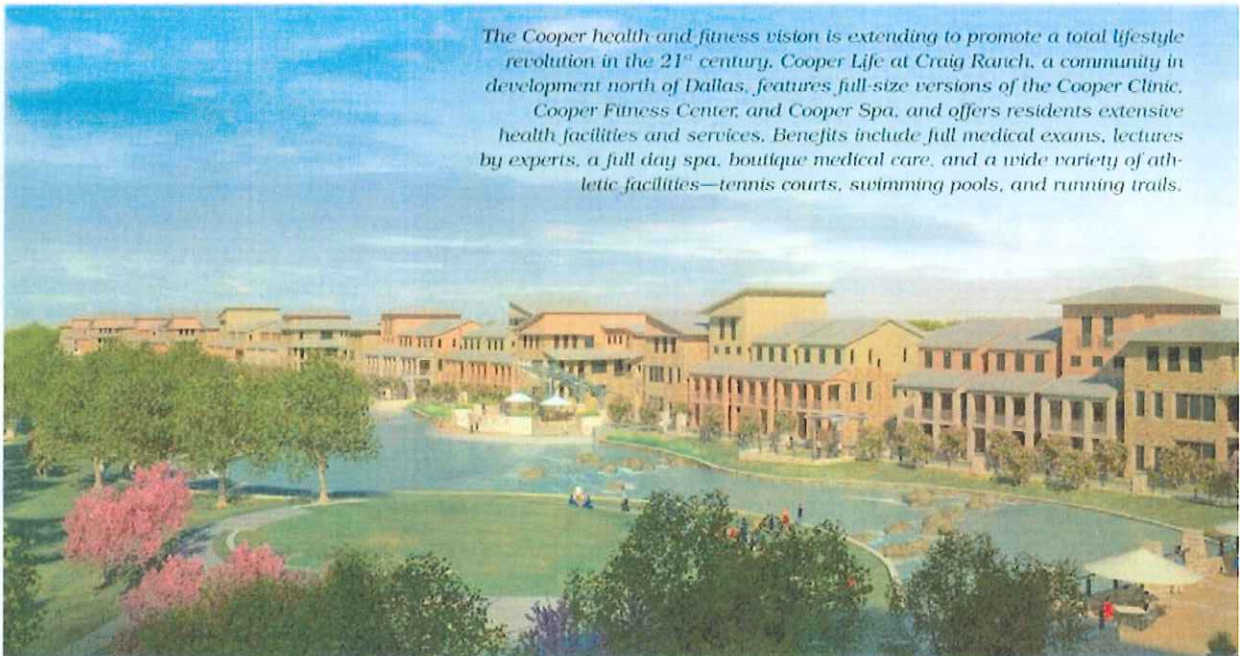
Post: At the Cooper Clinic, why underscore the importance of a thorough—what you call "gold standard"—physical exam?

Essential components of *Start Strong, Finish Strong*:

- 1 Get a thorough "gold standard" physical examination.
- 2 Exercise regularly.
- 3 Maintain proper weight through proper nutrition.
- 4 Follow a wise supplement strategy.
- 5 Eliminate tobacco products in all forms.
- 6 Control alcohol: one drink per day for women, two drinks for men.
- 7 Stress management.

KC: An examination is the greatest motivator, particularly if people discover how their performance compares with others the same age and gender. We feel you cannot have a successful program until you first determine basic information—body weight, percentage of body fat, level of fitness, and cholesterol level. Knowing these baseline numbers, people can be motivated to incorporate change, and we can recommend how to improve

The Cooper health and fitness vision is extending to promote a total lifestyle revolution in the 21st century. Cooper Life at Craig Ranch, a community in development north of Dallas, features full-size versions of the Cooper Clinic, Cooper Fitness Center, and Cooper Spa, and offers residents extensive health facilities and services. Benefits include full medical exams, lectures by experts, a full day spa, boutique medical care, and a wide variety of athletic facilities—tennis courts, swimming pools, and running trails.



an abnormal measurement. About 92,000 people have come to our clinic in the past 37 years. Most patients are self-referred and feel healthy. During this time, we have detected more than 1,300 cases of prostate cancer, 650 cases of breast cancer, 350 cases of colon cancer, 200 cases of lung diseases, and 100 kidney cancers—all through routine exams.

TC: It is very important for people in their 30s and younger to get exams and preventive tests. Younger people will often say, "I feel fine. Why do I really need an exam?" The reason is to establish a baseline. By following basic test results over time, you can monitor changes in lab values or test results that may indicate early stages of disease. In this way, you can treat

the condition before it becomes symptomatic or dangerous.

Post: How much exercise do you recommend for optimum cardiovascular and emotional health?

KC: Incremental change is hard, without question. By the yard it is hard, but by the inch, it's a cinch. If you walk two miles in 30 minutes three times a week, two miles in 35 minutes four times a week, or three miles in 45 minutes twice a week, you achieve health and longevity fitness, which translates to a six year increase in longevity and 58 percent decrease in death from all causes.

If you want to be in the top 40th percentile and be aerobically fit—which carries with it a 65 percent reduction in death from all causes and a nine-year increase in longevity—you'd have to run two miles in less than 20 minutes four times a week, or walk three miles in 45 minutes five days a week, or take an aerobic dance class 45 minutes four days a week.

However, you can be aerobically fit and unhealthy, as the runner Jim Fixx was. He ran up to 50 miles a week but refused to undergo a stress test, had high cholesterol, and didn't adhere to other wellness concepts. As I did when younger, he thought that exercise would overcome many, if not all, the deleterious effects of diet, smoking, or overeating. In 1982, I wrote that nothing known to man totally protects against coronary disease—neither medicine, surgery, nor marathon running. During that period, many distraught widows reported that their husbands followed my exact guidelines for exercise but ignored weight, diet, smoking habits and died of heart attacks or some other condition. That is why I changed my recommendation from saying more is better. Now I advise walking two miles in 30 minutes three times a week or collectively 30 minutes of activity most days per week.

Post: Many people start a program with the best of intentions but don't stick with it. How do you maintain the momentum?

KC: Discipline and motivation. The Achilles' heel of any fitness program—where the best intentions typically become unglued—is a lack of motivation. Where there is the will, there's the way.

Rick Salewske: The Biggest Winner

In October 2000, Rick Salewske topped the scales at 538 pounds. Unable to fit in conventional seating, he quit attending favorite sporting events and found airline travel almost impossible—even driving his car became a challenge.

His boss became so concerned that he flew to Dallas to discuss possible interventions, including bariatric surgery, to save his valued employee.

"I saw that this man cared about me and truly believed in me," Rick recalls. "That inspired me to believe that I could perhaps lose the weight."

While Rick appreciated the surgical suggestion, he opted to first try a less invasive route—diet and exercise. One obstacle: he really didn't know how.

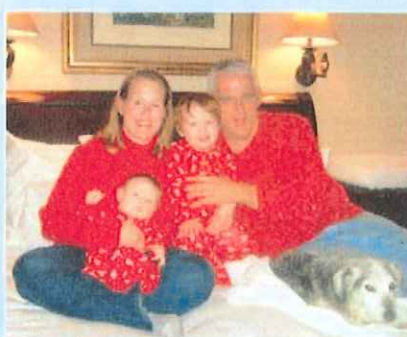
Despite doubts, his boss offered Rick \$2,000 as incentive to find a weight-loss program, mentioning the Cooper Lean Program at the Cooper Clinic.

Rick took his boss up on the generous offer.

"I went to the Cooper Clinic in 2000 and, over the next two years, lost 300 pounds using the program," says Rick, who even ran 13½ miles in a marathon with Dr. Tyler Cooper in 2006. "I've kept the weight off by working out at the Cooper Aerobics Center six or seven days a week and following a sensible diet. My parents are so happy. I also met a girl, got married, and we just had our second child. In short, I got my life back!"

Today, Rick helps others understand that success is possible, given the right tools.

"I want people to get excited about health and exercise. I launched the web site www.lost300.com so people can write to me," adds Rick. "If somebody can make a difference in another life, that's huge. Believe me, I know."



Life is radically different for Rick Salewske, who shed hundreds of pounds, ran with Tyler Cooper, met wife Kelley, and became the proud father of Owen and newborn Henry.

Since 1960, I've been involved in a regular exercise program. Today, I am 76. Even though I broke my leg skiing three years ago and was on crutches for nine weeks, I didn't stop exercising. I used a stationary bike to exercise my arms and one leg.

People ask me the reason that I've been so successful, still working 50 to 60 hours a week at 76 when nearly one third of my medical school class has died. I embrace the importance of maintaining proper weight, proper nutrition, proper exercise, and proper supplementation. My motivation to exercise is quality of life. Ask the majority of people why they exercise and you'll discover the same reply: exercise makes me feel good. If I lay off, I get withdrawal symptoms.

TC: Ultimately, it requires discipline to be consistent, but different ideas will motivate people. Personally, I want to maintain physical fitness and mental acuity when older. We don't care what gets you going, as long as you get going.

Post: Would you outline a basic training program?

KC: There are basically four phases: warm-up, aerobic activity, cool down for at least 5 minutes and then a strength-training component for at least 20 minutes twice a week. That equates to about 30 minutes most days of the week.

As you get older, strength training becomes more important. In the past,



A testament to the benefits of lifelong fitness, Dr. Ken Cooper stays in optimal condition through rigorous race-walking and routine weight-bearing workouts.

weight training. In your 50s, switch to 60 and 40. In your 60s, 55 percent and 45 percent. Increase weight training as you age, because you can maintain a high level of aerobic fitness in early life by walking.

Post: What is the secret of strength at every age?

KC: The secret is consistency. You can build strength even at advanced ages. In a Tufts University study a few years ago, researchers studied men with weak quadriceps muscles. The

anything else. By reducing calories over time, you'll see beneficial effect. We took that to the next level of cutting one thing out, then the next thing out, and so forth. I've used it. It's really effective because it's not that hard, plus you lose weight more slowly, which enables you to keep it off longer. One of my goals is giving people easy solutions to improve their lives.

Post: How do you navigate stresses of daily life?

KC: I manage stress by exercising. In August last year, I performed my 19th examination of President George W. Bush: I've been one of his physicians since 1988. At 61, he ranks in the top one percentile for men his age. He's in unbelievable shape. He does that by exercising an hour six days a week. Last year, two reporters inquired how I could recommend that the president waste time exercising when he should be governing the country and solving world problems. I told them, "I've heard him say more than once that I don't exercise for my heart; I exercise for my head. There is no way I could control the stress in my life if I didn't exercise." I asked the reporters, "Would you rather have a president who controls stress by taking drugs and tranquilizers, or someone exercising to control stress?" The reporters never made an adverse comment about his exercise program.

I'm no different. There is no way I'd be here if I didn't work out before going home to finish the evening. Plus, I have found that exercising makes the rest of the day more productive. For my aerobic workout, I walk fast—13 to 14 minutes per mile at least five days a week. I work out with weights at least three times a week. That's enough for me because I'm not interested in competition anymore; I'm interested in maintenance of good health and fitness. My resting pulse rate runs about 48.

TC: I do the exact same thing. I actually physiologically feel poorly if I don't exercise. I still run about 40 to 50 miles a week and lift two to three times a week. I swim a couple of times a week, play basketball, water-ski, and do a lot of climbing and hiking. If not working or with my family, I'm usually doing something physical. I love being active. I need it to relieve

"The Achilles' heel of any fitness program—where the best intentions typically become unglued—is a lack of motivation. Where there is the will, there's the way."

we thought aerobics was enough. But you can be aerobically fit, yet unable to pick up a sack of groceries without throwing your back out—particularly at my age. I learned that the hard way. At 55, I could run five miles in 40 minutes, but I couldn't ski more than two hours without my quads burning so bad I had to stop. I started doing leg lifts to build quadriceps mass and strength and found on my 74th birthday (before I broke my leg) I could ski up to six hours without any burning.

Age is a factor. In your 40s, your exercise regimen should include: 70 percent aerobic activity, 30 percent

men exercised daily, progressively increasing weight on the ankles while doing leg lifts. At the end of the study, the men increased strength of quadriceps by about 175 percent, increased the size of quadriceps muscles by 9 percent, and increased walking speed on the treadmill by 48 percent, even though the average age was 90.4 years.

Post: In your latest book, you write about the "One-Thing Weight-Loss Eating Plan." How does that work?

TC: During my coursework, a professor talked about an easy way to lose weight by cutting out of the diet one food high in calories without changing

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stress and feel better.

Post: What inspired Cooper Life?

TC: When I began working on Cooper Life at Craig Ranch, I thought, "Why can't we create an inviting community that successfully overcomes the hurdles to wellness people face?" That's what Cooper Life is—a health-centered community that completely removes the obstacles that stop people from sustaining a wellness lifestyle. At Cooper Life, residents will have regular preventive medical exams, a doctor on call 24/7, healthy meals prepared and delivered to their door, and even an assigned personal trainer and a dietitian. We provide the information and the time. The primary motivation behind the community

was to create a place that makes exercise and healthy living an easy option.

KC: Besides offering residents a comfortable and welcoming environment, Cooper Life also has the potential to be a helpful long-term study for everyone involved. Residents of Cooper Life will be able to have a complete examination at least once a year, with six-month check-ups to help track progress. They also become members of the Cooper Fitness Center and will be able to keep detailed records of their fitness goals and accomplishments there.

Post: Despite the growth in knowledge about prevention, why are so many Americans in poor physical condition?

KC: Baby boomers led the wellness movement for 22 years—1968-1990. But when the 76 million boomers turned 50, many lost interest, gained weight, stopped exercising, and brought their kids with them. Our longevity ranks 42nd in the world today—down from 11th two decades ago—despite spending more money on healthcare than any country in the world. We're looking at a very dismal

future unless we regroup.

I'm concentrating with all my power, being, and money to restore fitness in schools and to concentrate on kids. Last year, [Texas State] Senator Jane Nelson and I worked to pass Senate Bill 530 that mandates P.E. for K-8th graders and requires annual physical fitness testing of nearly four million 3rd-12th graders with the FITNESSGRAM program, which was created by The Cooper Institute. Data from schools that already implement FITNESSGRAM show that physically fit students score higher academically and have less discipline problems. Watch and see what we're doing in Texas because we're going to lead the country.

Post: Juggling so many responsibilities, how do you keep priorities in order?

KC: Number one is my faith—my belief in God. Number two is my family. Number three is my work. Because of the demands on my life over the years, there is a tendency to allow work to jump to number one and then family number two and God at the bottom. At that stage, I'm miserable. My faith, beliefs, and religion have made me successful. ▲

—by Patrick Perry, M.P.H.