

# Our panel of experts answers all your queries on matters of mind

## On fitness



### Martha Lourey Bird

MSPSc, BSpSc(ExSc), DipRT

**Q**I'd like to try pilates but will it help me lose weight?  
CN, Abbotsford, NSW

**A** Pilates was developed by German gymnast, boxer and nurse Joseph Pilates back in the early 20th century, and has become increasingly popular with celebrities such as Madonna and Oprah Winfrey, as well as the rest of us, in

Pilates works on your spine, abdomen and buttocks to strengthen them

the past 10 years. It is a great addition to an all-round exercise program, but should not be the sole component of your exercise regime. Pilates classes or video or DVD work-outs offer a good way to tone your

body and improve your posture. Pilates works on your spine, abdomen and buttocks to strengthen them and thus improve your posture and core strength. In fact, by doing pilates you should find your deep abdominal muscles get stronger, which will help hold everything in place – improving the appearance of the whole tummy region! This not only makes you slimmer, it aids digestion and reduces the risk of back pain and of a hernia. In fact, a basic principle underlying all pilates exercises is learning how to protect your back.

However, to lose weight you will need to make cardiovascular options the basis of your exercise routine. Aim to do regular aerobic work-outs (such as walking and swimming) which will burn excess energy and reduce fat stores.

Two great tools for you are the *Weight Watchers* 'Introduction to Yoga and Pilates' DVD and the 'MOVE More' DVD, which accompanies your Week 8 handbook.

The most important thing is to incorporate changes into your exercise routine – having a variety of work-out options combining pilates with more vigorous activities will keep you from getting bored and provide the balance you need for long term results.



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## On cooking



### Amanda Lennon

Senior food editor

**Q**Can I use a sugar substitute in place of sugar in recipes?  
NM, Shelly Beach, NSW

**A** Sugar substitutes are great because they give you all the sweetness of sugar without the extra kilojoules. They are particularly suited to add to hot drinks such as coffee, tea or hot chocolate. But not all sugar substitutes can be used in recipes that call for sugar crystals. When cooking with sugar substitutes, you'll probably get better results if you use one that has been developed especially for baking. Some granular sugar substitutes are made from sugar, and can be substituted cup for cup for sugar, which

makes measuring much easier.

Sugar is an incredibly versatile ingredient and it does a lot more than just add sweetness to dishes

Sugar is an incredibly versatile ingredient and does a lot more than just add sweetness to dishes. It adds softness to dough, stability to eggwhites (as in meringues) and acts as a preservative. There are many varieties of sugar, each with a specific use. Different crystal sizes means one type can't always

be substituted for another. Caster sugar, for example, is perfect for making meringues and sweetening liquids, and its fine crystals mean it dissolves easily. Raw sugar, on the other hand, with its large crystals, is better suited to biscuits and slices.

For best results in cooking and baking, use sugar substitutes in recipes that have been developed with them in mind. You'll find a good selection in *Weight Watchers* cookbooks – a couple of my favourites include the Individual Choc-mint Cheesecakes from *Simply The Best 2004* and the Chocolate Banana Bread recipe from *Simply The Best 2005*. For more recipes designed especially for individual sugar substitutes, visit the manufacturers' website.



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and body, to help you be your best, both inside and out!

### On life matters



#### Domonique Bertolucci

ACC, Dip CP Vice President, International Coach Federation Australasia – NSW

**Q**I want to set goals in other areas of my life, but don't know where to begin.  
JS, Emerald, Qld

**A** Good for you! The beginning of the year is an ideal time to start setting goals, but if there are several areas of your life that you would like to improve, it can be hard to know where to begin.

Don't make the mistake of expecting to change your whole life overnight. A smarter approach is to look at where you would like to be by the end of the year, and break each goal down into six to ten smaller goals or steps. You might even like to choose one or two mini-goals to focus on each month.

It's important to set goals that you feel confident you can achieve. That doesn't mean you should choose goals that don't require any effort, but by setting small, achievable goals you will begin to feel more successful, more often. This will help to build your confidence for future goal setting. Another great benefit of this approach is that you will have a lot more opportunities to celebrate your success!

Aim to set at least one goal, large or small, in each of these areas: friends and family, romance, work, fun and recreation, finances, and personal growth or spirituality, as well as health and weight loss.

If you're not sure what your goals should be, ask yourself, "What would I like to say about my life by this time next year?" The answers will help you set goals for each area. If you want to boost your confidence, use these answers as affirmations, repeating them to yourself each morning and night.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Your *Weight Watchers* Passport to Success is a great place to start your goal setting. In it you'll find all you need to set achievable goals, as well as hints to help you break your goals down into mini-goals.



If your letter to Domonique is published, you'll win a prize to enrich your life. This reader receives an "Eternity" journal from Corban & Blair, valued at \$39. Bound in linen, it's perfect to record your progress.

### On natural alternatives



#### Jan Purser

Dip Nutr, DRT

**Q** Could you advise on how to manage heartburn naturally?  
DM, Castle Hill, NSW

**A** Also known as gastroesophageal reflux, heartburn is a nasty reaction which produces a sharp burning pain in the chest and acidic burps that burn the throat. It occurs when stomach acid travels back up the oesophagus. There is a tight sphincter muscle at the stomach opening that should prevent reflux, but sometimes it does not close completely. People with hiatus hernia are prone to reflux, as are those whose oesophageal sphincter muscle has lost tone. Pregnant women may also suffer due to the baby pushing against their stomach.

You can tackle the problem of heartburn in various ways. Whisk a teaspoon of slippery elm powder in a glass of water and drink it before each meal. It coats the lining of the

Do you overeat?  
Do you eat in a rush? Heartburn can occur when the stomach overproduces acid to cope with a large quantity of food.

oesophagus, protecting it from acid while soothing and promoting healing.

Avoid food and drinks that exacerbate reflux such as coffee, alcohol, chocolate, chilli and fatty foods.

Think about your habits. Do you overeat? Do you eat in a rush? If so, eat smaller meals more slowly. Heartburn can occur when the stomach overproduces acid to cope with a large quantity of food. If you chew well and eat slowly, your stomach will respond more appropriately.

Don't lie down immediately after eating. If you suffer reflux after going to bed, eat a smaller dinner earlier in the evening. If reflux continues, see a naturopath or medical professional.



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If you have a question for one of our panellists, write to: The Panel, PO Box 1961, North Sydney, NSW 2059. Include the name of the panellist you wish to address (sorry, no personal replies) and, if writing to Martha, please include your shoe size.