

## **EXERCISE DEMONS** Exercise your way to victory!

Creator: Daniel Healy

Exercise Demons is an Alternate Reality Game meant to encourage healthy living and physical fitness. It has elements of a Role Playing Game in which players perform certain real-world activities in order to earn certain attributes and power ups for their players. Ideally, this game would be played over a long term, with teams or individuals playing 2 to 3 times a week by following certain predetermined workout routines.

**STORY:** The Demons of Slothylvania are encroaching on the land of the Fit, slowing and distorting everything they touch. Players must choose from one of six playable characters: the Warrior, the Elf, and the Dwarf, with male and female versions of each. Characters will serve as a template for which physical characteristics players want to improve over the course of the game: the Warrior for total athleticism, the Elf for cardiovascular fitness and heart health, and the Dwarf for muscle building and overall strength.

**RULES:** Different physical and diet bonuses translate to different points on the list of character attributes. The basic slate of activities is broken down into cardio, upper body muscles, and lower body muscles. These translate into agility points, attack points, and defend points. Agility determines how quickly you take a turn, attack your attack strength, and defend your defend strength. Agility also determines how likely a character is to “dodge” an attack (a predetermined probability that increases with agility).

**GAMEPLAY:** I see this working best as a computer based RPG. Players would start with their initial character and then develop its attributes in order to win battles and complete quests. Each time they exercise, they could add more points to the categories listed above. If this is being used as a method of helping kids exercise, parents could serve as a “Guardian” which allows points to be added and validates that exercise has taken place.

**MISERY/JUSTIFICATION:** Ideally, I see this game as targeting the obesity epidemic in the United States, especially among children younger than 14. Obesity is a form of misery for two primary reasons: the obviously damaging physical and health consequences, and the more subtle social and psychological effects. I think that often children are taught that the only ways to exercise involve subjecting yourself to the scrutiny of others, often by playing sports. The negative social stigma of being bad at a group activity dissuades kids from taking the plunge and forming healthy habits. Ideally this game would be a way to teach that there are long term benefits from working out: improving your character and winning the war against the demons! And it could be done in a way that separates success from self esteem and minimizes personal vulnerability.

**READING:** McGonigal’s description of Chore Wars gave me some inspiration; I like the idea of making an activity which is seen as negative positive. I further like the computer interface which Chore Wars uses.

