

**SCOTT BROWN** is a partner in the bankruptcy group with Lewis and Roca in Phoenix. In high school he lettered several times (eight, to be exact) and was best friends with—and runner-up to—the school’s “most athletic student,” or at least he’s pretty sure he was. After a 15-year layoff, he plans to re-enter competitive sports next spring by trying out for his firm’s kickball team.

## “Does this suit make me look fat?”

It’s a fair question I ask my mirror in the semi-dark every morning, speaking in a hushed voice so as not to wake my still-slumbering wife. (She doesn’t approve of me talking to myself, much less the mirror.)

For a long time the mirror told me that I looked “pretty sharp,” “not bad” or “killer, dude.” But lately I’ve begun to doubt the mirror’s judgment. I received a phone call from a woman who said a common acquaintance recommended that she call me. She identified herself as a “master’s” student at ASU working on her thesis about the correlation between commuting and obesity.

“Obesity?”

Yes, I heard her right. I politely listened to her summarize her thesis and then declined her invitation to come to my home and take measurements of my body over a period of several commuting weeks.

But the damage was done. My ego is in ruins, and I haven’t been on speaking terms with my mirror ever since.

I have read some of the literature describing the obesity epidemic in our country, but I didn’t realize “common acquaintances” perceived me as part of the problem. Granted, the word “obesity” is misused (technically, I’m only “overweight”), but wasn’t I just in high school, sporting a 6’2”, 155-pound frame, wishing I could actually gain weight? What happened?

I have a lot of excuses, including:

1. I stopped playing competitive sports after high school.  
There’s something about competitive sports that keeps you obesity-less. Remember Michael Jordan sporting a Wizards uniform for the first time? I rest my case.
2. I got married. I know it sounds cliché, but marriage softened me up in the middle ... and top and bottom.
3. I bought a car. Actually, my wife owned a car, I married her and then started using her car—and stopped riding my bicycle.

4. I grew up with four older sisters. Though no direct link exists between them and my current weight, my general rule of thumb is to blame them for all of my problems.

Above everything else, though, I became a lawyer. Is there a more sedentary profession than the law? OK, maybe accounting—but even still, there should be a HUGE sign on every law school warning students that lawyering is a significant health risk.

Consider the commute. I drive 60 miles roundtrip, but over that distance I probably take a maximum of 200 to 300 steps. According to my treadmill, I burn about one calorie every 15 steps, which means the only way for me to not gain weight is to go Gandhi. When I telecommute, it’s even worse, because I walk about 20 steps from my bed to my computer desk—assuming I make it out of bed, that is—and move after that only for an occasional trip to the pantry (intake) or to the bathroom (outtake).

You would think working on a big document review project would garner some exercise, but it doesn’t. Yes, boxes often have to be moved from one room to another, but all I do is stick out my arm and push the telephone line to my secretary. She then reaches out her arm and pushes the telephone line to the project clerk, who gets all of the exercise.

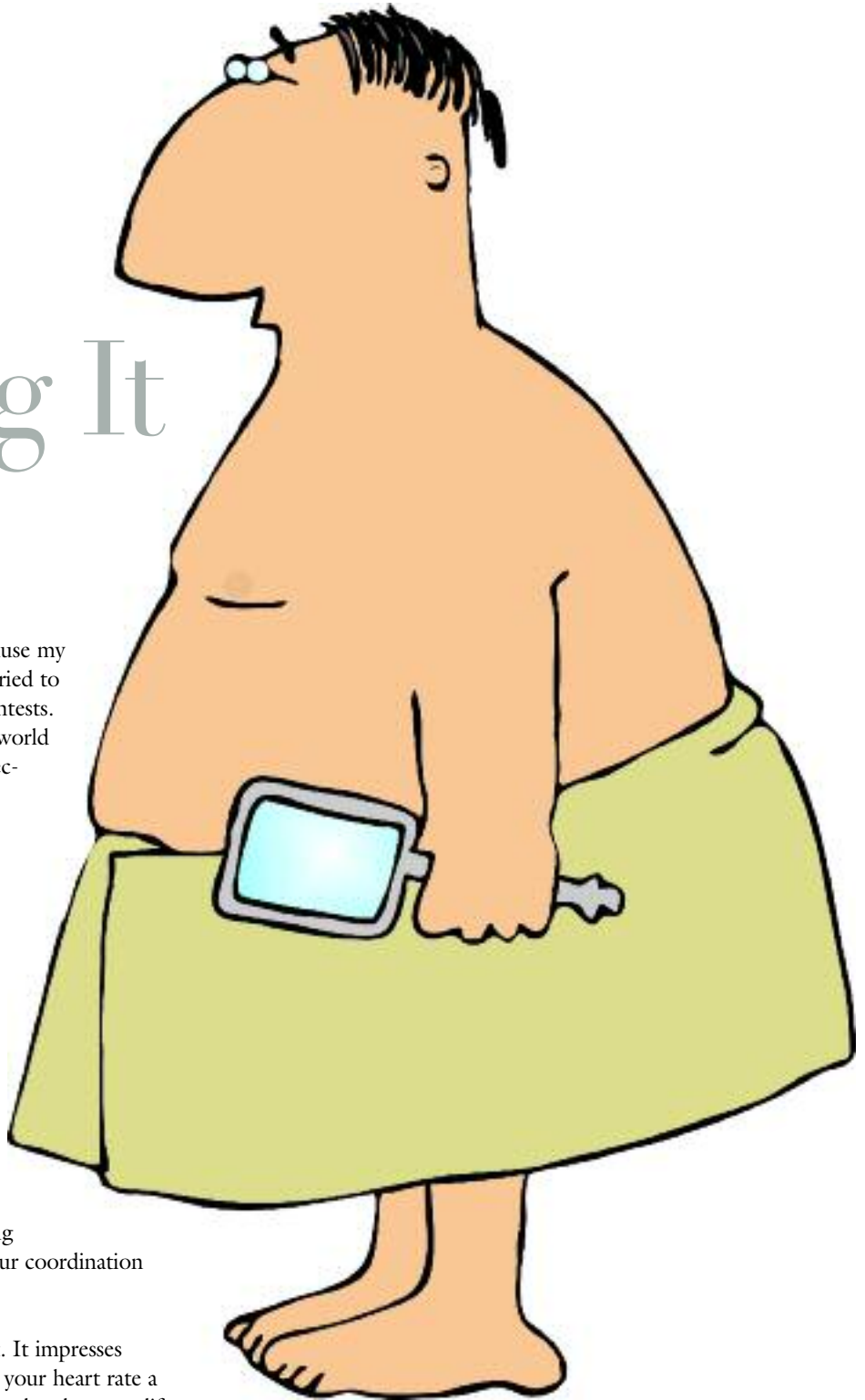
And it doesn’t help that every time I begin a new and exciting exercise program I’m soon interrupted by some urgent case that causes me to miss a workout and then another and then to abandon exercising entirely.

Even worse, when the firm pays for my lunch, I pile it on like I’m at a family reunion. Then I go straight back to my desk and sit for five more hours of work.

Having now studied this problem for a few weeks, I think I have discovered several solutions to the world’s weight problems:

1. Everyone should do more jumping jacks. I’m serious.  
Remember doing jumping jacks every time you had P.E. in elementary school? Some kids could never figure out how to get their hands to go up over their heads at the same time their feet spread apart. I’m proud to say I overachieved in

# Losing It



jumping jacks, which was a good thing because my P.E. teacher wasn't very creative and often tried to fill the hour with countless jumping-jack contests. Anyway, I was pretty fit back then, and the world seemed fitter as well. I think there's a connection.

2. Bill while you exercise. How? One suggestion is reverse dictation, *i.e.*, have an office assistant read documents into a Dictaphone during the day that you can listen to at night while you exercise. Keep a pen and notepad handy in the event you hear something important. Don't forget a towel to wipe away your sweat so you don't smear the ink.
3. Try using the stairs at work when there's *not* an emergency or a fire drill. You might also consider joining your firm's kickball team (yes, my firm has one) or early morning yoga group. (Jumping jacks will improve your coordination for kickball and yoga.)
4. Carry a box of documents home each night. It impresses everyone in the elevator, and it will increase your heart rate a bit. Make sure you use your legs, not your back, when you lift the box. Otherwise you might find yourself billing from a hospital bed and unable to do jumping jacks for several weeks.
5. Work less. I recognize that this is a controversial suggestion that might lead to the downfall of the legal profession as we know it—or, at the very least, get you fired (consider becoming a P.E. teacher if this happens). But working less gives you more time for self-care. Be careful that you don't fill the vacuum with unhealthy activities, like yard work or house projects.

No one ever became fit from doing paint touch-up every time his or her toddler takes a Sharpie to the wall, although chasing a toddler who is trying to escape with a Sharpie is considered a health activity by 1 out of every 5 doctors.

There you have it! With some luck and consistent effort, I guarantee that you will enjoy a long and fulfilling relationship with your suit, skirt, pants, shorts or whatever—and, most especially, with your mirror. 