

MAKE EXERCISE PART OF YOUR LIFE

**Benefits** include improved circulation, blood pressure, sleep, energy, mood, concentration, memory, endurance and flexibility. It also helps with weight loss, muscle mass, bone density, blood sugar, skin quality, blood oxygenation, relieves tension and frustration, and improves digestion, waste processing, and overall general health. It can help with cholesterol, diabetes, bad backs, depression, improves self-esteem, decreases one’s stress response, and reduce reliance on caffeine, drugs, alcohol and medications. Exercise burns off the adrenaline and cortisol associated with stress, anxiety and anger, and helps create new brain cells which is why it is being used to help people with dementia.

**Goals are best when they are tied to values, measurable, detailed, realistic and phrased positively**, such as “I will exercise for 30 minutes 5 x a week, limit deserts to 2 x a week and weigh 155 lbs by June 1 so that I can improve my health to be active with my grandchildren.” Outcomes like this are attainable and trackable, which can be motivating to sustain discipline.

**“Sitting is the new smoking”** exemplifies how unhealthy a sedentary lifestyle is. Taking breaks from sitting at least every 30 minutes (with a little walking and stretching) is really important, and fidgeting when sitting is actually healthy for you.

**Walking at least 20-30 minutes** a day is a great foundation for exercise (taking 3 10-minute walks throughout the day is better than of 1 30-minute walk as this helps modulate our mood, minimizes the build-up of stress and anxiety throughout our day).

**Five minutes.** People complain, “I don’t have the energy to exercise.” Often after work, I feel like a wet dishrag and going to the gym for 45 minutes seems impossible. But, I tell myself, “Just go to the gym for 5 minutes, and if I still feel this bad I can come home.” This works 99% of the time as I can do anything for 5 minutes. And the results are stunning as I go from feeling like a wet dishrag to feeling like a Six Million Dollar Man basically every time.

**Partner up** to hold one another accountable and make routine exercise more enjoyable, take a class, join some kind of league, make it a family event (our Y has ones like this run by the parents), or work with a personal trainer (you do want proper training regarding weights and stretching). The social benefits from these options can be worthwhile all by themselves.

**Try different things** to find what suits you, whether it’s hiking, biking, kickboxing, swimming, weights or yoga, to match what best fits your abilities, preferences, budget and schedule. If something doesn’t benefit you enough, try something else until you find something that does.

**Make it schedule-friendly** by working out first thing in the morning (especially cardio) is an absolutely great start to your day, or go directly from work to the gym. Find the best time. A recent article noted the best time to work out is in the afternoon, but the most important thing to do is to exercise on a regular basis.

**For the financially or time-strapped**, there is the 7-minute workout (google it) which only requires your body, a wall and a chair, although a five-minute warm-up might be a good idea.

**For people with physical limitations**, there is the “Sit and be Fit” program (on PBS), and the pool is exceptional in providing buoyancy to take pressure of joints like knees, hips and ankles.

**Get a gym membership** which is particularly helpful when there is bad weather or in winter, especially in Wisconsin. Many employers or insurance companies will provide a subsidy.

**Don’t let self-consciousness, poor fitness, or negative associations from childhood stop you.** Harsh gym teachers, annoying peers, fitness tests, and poor coordination and fitness turned gym class into a seeming terror zone for some people. You are an adult now, fellow gym members are there to be healthy, and a lot of nice people are at the gym.

**The best way to lose weight** is by doing longer workouts which burn more calories. Weight lifting is the best way keep weight off. Increasing exercise by 10 or 20% more does not mean you will continue to lose weight (or improve muscle mass or cardio) as your body will benefit to a certain degree and then stabilize at that level (a great article “The Myth of Metabolism” by Herman Pontzer in AARP The Magazine that breaks down all of the biology behind this).

**Doing a range of exercise** provides one’s body the opportunity to grow old gracefully, otherwise the maxim “use it or lose it” will apply, so be diverse; walk, swim, lift weights, etc. but also address specific things like balance (tai chi), coordination (ping pong), spine (yoga), etc. Group exercises like basketball, volleyball, softball or kickball can be a lot of fun. Using foam rollers to relieve muscle tension and soreness is also beneficial. Sauna and steam rooms help expel toxins.

E**xercise is very beneficial** in many ways, but the gains are short-lived, so one must work out often to take advantage of all the positives on an ongoing basis, especially as we get older.

**For more information about exercise**, I find *The New York Times*, *Men’s Health Magazine*, *Live Strong*, and the Mayo Clinic to be very helpful websites regarding exercise and overall health. YouTube offers an incredible range of videos to learn about almost anything.

**Just find a way to make exercise part of your daily and weekly routines**, it’s too good for you and crucial to help managing stress, anxiety and anger in ways nothing else can.

**DISCLAIMER: This is not medical advice.**

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