



ATTENTIVE
HEALTH

get moving

One of the most critical aspects of physical, mental, and emotional well-being is our level of physical activity. The trouble is, it often seems like a chore; “exercise” has become a four-letter word. And yet, our bodies were designed for movement – lots of it – and we don’t do very well without it. Not only do muscles lose tone, but bones get softer and more brittle, and our emotional resilience declines. Among other things, we can’t think as clearly, and we can’t concentrate as fully.

If incorporating more physical activity is your Achilles heel, try some of these suggestions:

1. **change your vocabulary.** Instead of “exercise”, start calling it “movement” – this has a much more appealing ring to it and describes the purpose (whereas “exercise” denotes unpleasant activity done for the sake of achieving certain outcomes...NOT FUN!)
2. **change your mindset.** Picture yourself moving your body in ways that make you feel good, light, energetic and imagine the results of tighter muscles, and a trimmer physique.
3. **choose recreation.** If you enjoy fitness classes, like going to the gym, or have a fondness for exercise videos, great! If not, start thinking along the lines of sports & recreation: swimming, biking, hiking, roller-blading, dancing, kayaking, horseback riding, softball, tennis, racquetball, etc.
4. **make a commitment.** Commit to incorporating some type of active movement into your life every day. It’s certainly okay to take a day off occasionally, but it is important to have a consistent level of activity every day.
5. **start wherever you are.** As the saying goes: Rome wasn’t built in a day! Athletes train over a lifetime to build a level of skill and ability, musicians practice every day, etc. If you are a beginner at anything, it isn’t practical to imagine that you’re going to be able to do this new thing perfectly or even very well... yet. So, face the brutal facts of where you are, and just get started from there!
6. **start with small steps.** 30 minutes per day is ideal, but as little as 10 minutes a day is a good start. As with anything, if you’re not doing something because the step that you’re trying to take is too big for you, make it a smaller one until it works for you. Keep it simple. If your schedule during the workweek makes it too difficult to do this, make a commitment to setting aside a solid 60-90 minutes on Saturday mornings (or similar). One workout per week is better than none, but it’ll be even better if you work extra hard during that time.
7. **combine it with an activity you enjoy.** If you like to read, try reading while riding on an incumbent bicycle. If there are particular TV shows that you like to watch, record them and only allow yourself to watch while walking on a treadmill, stair stepper, or elliptical trainer. You can use movies in a similar fashion – by breaking it up into installments, you may be even more excited to get moving!

8. **build on your strengths.** Oftentimes we chastise ourselves for the things we don't do well, and wonder when we are going to get "motivated" to do these things. The reality is, there are certain things we all do well and certain areas where we're weaker. Instead of waiting for your weak area to somehow become strong, capitalize on your strengths to support those areas where you need a bit more help. If you love music, incorporate it into a movement routine & let the enjoyment of the music be your reward. If you are a deeply spiritual person, tie movement in with your spiritual practice by incorporating prayer, meditation, or inspirational music. If you are a very social person, create a social activity around your movement routine. If you are a very organized person, organize your schedule around movement instead of vice-versa.
9. **schedule it.** Regardless of how organized or schedule-driven you are, it is important to establish a regular time of day that you'll devote to being active. Simply hoping that you'll find the time "after work" or "on Wednesdays and Fridays" will almost never work. This is one of those "big rocks" in life that you must put into the container before the smaller ones, or else it will get crowded out. Be specific! 7 pm on weeknights, or 6:30 am on Tuesdays & Thursdays, or 7 am on Saturdays – find a regular time slot on your calendar and stick to it. If your schedule is a variable one, you may need to plan this week by week.
10. **book someone else's time.** When relying on ourselves, it is amazing how many excuses we can come up with. Simply having someone else involved makes us less likely to back out.
 - ⦿ If you have a bigger budget, hire a personal trainer – besides the trainers at the gym, there are some that work out of their homes (saving you the gym fees), and some that even come to your home (saving you the trip). Even this is a stretch for you financially, it may be worth it to you in the long run to make a few sacrifices – perhaps even starting with a short-term commitment where you limit your training to 10 sessions or so. Even short-term commitments like that can be enough to get you in a routine, see substantial progress, and have you feeling comfortable about what you need to do going forward (the financial pinch doesn't hurt your motivation, either!).
 - ⦿ If you have a smaller budget, consider joining a class or two. We've come a long way from the days of simple aerobics – try something fun, some new activity where you're actually learning a new skill as well as being active, such as dance, karate, or other performing or martial arts. An important part of making the classes stick is to find one that works with your schedule, and make friends with the other participants.
 - ⦿ If finances are especially tight and you need a free option, make a commitment with a buddy. Again, book it in both of your calendars and hold one another accountable!

When all is said and done, the key is to find something that works for you – if you don't enjoy it, you're on the wrong track... but there is something for everyone: keep searching until you find your groove!