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Wellness ... Get on the Bus!

4 Scientific Ways to Make Your Workout Fun

Yes, it's possible to make exercise feel less like a chore—here's how.

You already know that staying fit is good for you. Exercise lowers the risk of heart disease, may help prevent certain types of cancer, lowers your risk of osteoporosis, prevents weight-gain and type 2 diabetes, helps you sleep better, and improves muscle and lung function. It can help lower anxiety and prevent depression, too. Working out also releases endorphins, our bodies' stress-fighters, leaving us feeling at ease, research suggests. In other words, working out can actually feel good—and even be fun. Not sold? You're not alone. Less than five percent of adults do at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily, according to the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition. While we're supposed to be engaging in 150 minutes of cardio per week, plus two days' worth of strength training targeting all the major muscle groups, only one-third of us actually do this. But working out doesn't have to be a drag. Here are four ways to kick start (and get a kick out of) your fitness routine.

1. Crank up the tunes.

If you're power-walking, running, or lifting weights, music can improve performance and even make you think the strenuous activity is easier than you otherwise might. Music helps you coordinate your workout, says Fabio Comana, a faculty instructor at the National Academy of Sports Medicine. For example, lyrics can reinforce aspects of a technique when they feature words like "punch," "cut," or "push."



The beat of your music can also affect how you synchronize your workout. Comana suggests the tempo of the music you listen to reflect the type of workout you're doing.

Here are some basic guidelines on which speeds to look for.

- Warm-ups: 100 to 110 beats per minute
- Strength exercises: 110 to 120 beats per minute
- Endurance, speed, and agility exercises: Higher than 120 beats per minute
- Stretching: 90 to 100 beats per minute

While music can make our workouts more fun, Comana warns against becoming too dependent on music—or TV—to distract from the exercise. "Sustainable behavior is connected to the experience and if music serves only to distract and tolerate, then no sustainable behavior is established," he says. "In this case, if that music is removed, there is no reason to exercise."

2. Head outside.

You probably don't need science to confirm that a jog through the woods is more enjoyable than pounding away on a treadmill, but exercising outdoors decreases feelings of tension, anger, and depression, while increasing engagement and helping participants feel more energized, research suggests. "Being outside enriches your experience," says Ellen Miller, the only American woman to have summited both sides of Mt. Everest and Outdoor Fitness Coach at the Vail Vitality Center and Vail Athletic Club in Vail, Colorado.

But you don't have to climb the world's highest mountain to reap the benefits of getting fit outdoors. An hour of hiking burns 530 calories, an hour of snowshoeing 500, and moving your typical run from the treadmill to outside can still burn 780 calories per hour. "Unplug from the electronic world and start to take in the sights, the smells, the sounds around you," says Miller. "Nature is incredibly therapeutic."

3. Be your own cheerleader.

Try leaving yourself notes of encouragement and surrounding yourself with positive people to help inspire and intensify your workouts. Athletes perform better and take longer to reach their exhaustion road block when they see happy faces instead of sad ones, new research suggests. Cyclists were subliminally shown happy and sad faces—in addition to active words, like "go," and inactive ones, like "stop"—in a study published in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. Researchers instructed participants to pedal to the point of exhaustion. Those who saw the positive cues pedaled three minutes longer than those who saw negative ones.

4. Buddy up.

Partnering with a significant other can give your exercise a serious boost. People were five times more likely to exercise if their spouse did, researchers found in a recent study. But you don't need a romantic partner to help power through a workout. Friends can help you stick to your exercise plans, too. We are social creatures and this helps explain the continued success of group fitness (averaging 28% participation rates), the growth of small group training (almost doubled since 2007), and the almost flat-line growth of one-on-one personal training, according to Comana. "A support system brings camaraderie, collaboration, accountability, and perhaps some friendly competition," he says.

4 Types of Emotional Support to Rely on During Weight Loss

Emotional support is the often forgotten piece of the weight loss puzzle. Everyone knows you need to watch what you eat and exercise regularly, but dealing with emotions and changing the way you think is what gets you to the final goal. However, knowing where to find emotional support is tricky--our usual go-to people may be less helpful or understanding than we would like. Read through these four types of emotional support to see which ones may be most helpful for your situation:



1. Friends and Family

If you have a friend or family member who is also trying to lose weight, you can support each other by sharing more than just recipes and workouts. Talking about your feelings, especially when you've had a bad day, helps put things back into perspective. We are often our own

worst critics and your loved ones can and will support you regardless of whether you ate that whole box of cookies. Although this is usually the first choice, friends and family can also be too close to the situation, so be sure to choose your confidant wisely.

2. Online Community

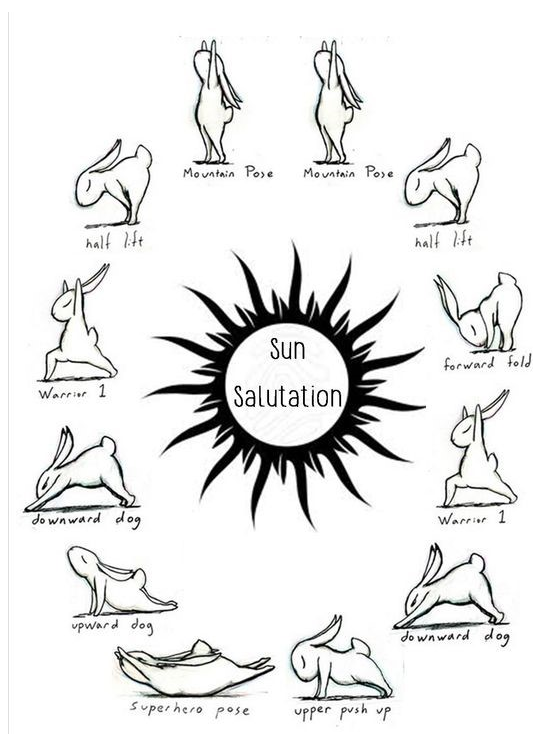
Online weight loss communities are an excellent source of information and support. Message boards help like-minded individuals find each other. Plus, the online community has the best of both worlds: you can make real friends who help you deal with real issues, while maintaining a certain amount of anonymity and distance. Your online friends are not intricately involved in your daily life, so they can offer insight on situations from an unbiased perspective. Since it is a whole community, the amount of emotional support is amazing. You will find that many people are having the exact same feelings you are and you'll be able to get advice from those that have gone through these situations before.

3. Organized Meetings

Whether you choose to attend meetings run by specific weight loss companies or want to opt for community support groups like Overeaters Anonymous, in-person meetings can be just the right thing. Like online communities, meetings give you a group of people going through the same struggles. Since weight gain is often tied to emotional eating, we need to learn how to deal with our personal feelings and experiences in new ways. Organized meetings give tips on how to get through universally tough food times, like the holidays, as well as helping members deal with difficult personal issues.

4. Medical Professionals

Medical professionals have experience helping people lose weight and can also be a source of emotional support. Your family doctor may be able to help you fight through feelings because he or she has known you for a long time. Dietitians are experts when it comes to weight loss. They have worked with clients just like you and can be a source of both information and understanding. For many people, excess weight is a symptom of some other internal problem. By working on these private issues with a therapist you may find that once the cause has been resolved, the symptoms, in the form of extra pounds, may slowly melt away too.





How to Eat More Fruit and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are high in vitamins, minerals and fiber and they're low in calories. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables may help you control your weight and blood pressure. So how can you eat more?

Which fruits and vegetables are best?

That's easy: They're all good! If you eat many different types of fruits and veggies, you're sure to get all the different types of nutrients you need. The American Heart Association recommends filling at least half your plate with fruits and veggies in order to make it to the recommended 4 ½ cups of each per day. The good news is that all produce counts, which means canned,

fresh and frozen varieties can help you reach your goal.

When buying canned, dried or frozen vegetables and fruit, be sure to compare food labels and choose the products with the lowest amount of sodium and added sugars.

Breakfast

- Eat melon, grapefruit or other fruit.
- Add bananas, raisins or berries to your cereal.
- Drink a small (6-ounce) glass of juice. Be sure it's 100% fruit or vegetable juice without excess sodium or sugar – **not** "fruit drink," "cocktail" or "punch."

Add chopped up vegetables to your eggs or potatoes. Try onions, celery, green or red bell peppers, or spinach.

Lunch

- Have a fruit or vegetable salad with lunch.
- Put vegetables on your sandwich, such as cucumber, sprouts, tomato, lettuce or avocado.
- Eat a bowl of vegetable soup. (Compare food labels and choose the product with the lowest amount of sodium you can find in your store, or make soup from scratch.)

Have a piece of fruit or raw veggie sticks instead of chips.

Snacks

- Keep raw veggie sticks handy, such as green or red bell peppers, green beans, celery or carrots.
- Carry dried fruit, such as raisins, dates or dried apricots, in your purse or pocket.
- Have any type of fresh fruit: grapes, apple, banana, orange, kiwi, etc.

On hot days, munch on a bowl of frozen fruits or vegetables, such as grapes, peas or bananas.

Dinner

- Have a fruit or vegetable salad with dinner.
- Add a side of steamed or microwaved vegetables – frozen veggies are fine!
- When you use the oven to cook your meal, put in a whole potato, sweet potato or yam at the same time.
- Add chopped vegetables like onions, garlic and celery when cooking soup, stew, beans, rice, spaghetti sauce and other sauces.

When making rice, add some frozen peas for the last three minutes of cooking.

Take the Next Step

If you're already eating plenty of fruits and veggies every day, you may be ready for the next step: include more color. All fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that may help prevent heart disease, cancer and other illnesses. Some of these nutrients are fiber, potassium, folate, and vitamin A and C. The best way to get all the various nutrients is to eat fruits and vegetables of many different colors. The five main color groups and examples in each group are listed below. Eat from as many color groups as you can each day.