

Making Fitness Fun:

Exposing 5 common myths that will motivate you to move.

By Dr. Todd Drybread, DC, QME, cPT

Ask just about anyone you know if exercise is good for them and they will answer, yes. Everyone knows that exercise is good for them, yet many still don't get regular exercise. Only 8 percent of men and 3 percent of women do any regularly scheduled exercise! Why is this?

Many people are caught up in their lives. People are in a continuous battle for time. Rather than living life, life is living them. People feel that they have very little control over what needs to be done and they put themselves on the back burner. In my line of work I see first hand people that most people are afraid of change. I think this may be why people are afraid of exercise. They know that they will need to change their lifestyle to fit exercise into it. There are five common myths about exercise that prevent people from making a change in their life, that could add years to their life and life to their years.

Myth #1

The Number One Exercise Myth: Exercise is boring.

The Truth: Exercise can be boring, so mix it up. Have fun.

To see a good example of fun while exercising, go to a playground and watch kids. Children will run around for hours, climbing, running, jumping, swinging, etc. The whole time they will be laughing and won't complain once about the exercise. The only time they might complain would be when other won't play fair with them.

Many people say it is because they're kids, and kids are healthier. Well, if you have ever taken a child shopping with you, it is amazing how soon they get tired. How is it that they can run around for hours playing, but can't walk 15 minutes in a store? The secret is that they are exercising and don't even know it. They're having so much fun, they don't care. We need to learn from our kids and look at exercise differently.

Some simple techniques are:

Goal Setting: Setting goals and reaching them is fun and rewarding.

Variety: Mixing up the types of exercise you do can make it interesting and fun. I recently trained for a marathon. I'll admit that it was pretty boring. I did very little cross training, which meant I was running a lot. I haven't had such an experience when training for my triathlons, because everyday is a different workout.

If you do anything repetitively without variety, it gets old quick. This is a common reason why people quit working out.

Many people who exercise a lot at the gym are doing multiple things. They are running, doing elliptical, lifting weights and going to various aerobic classes. Most gyms offer a variety of

classes from the basics (gentle yoga) to the more advanced (kickboxing). Don't be intimidated if you have never done a class before. Most instructors welcome newcomers. I recommend getting to class a little early your first time and tell the instructor you are new. Most will make sure you get set up properly and make you feel comfortable.

Mix It Up: Even if all you do is one type of exercise, you can still add variety to it. I guarantee that next time I train for a marathon that I will mix up the workout a lot more. For example:

If all you like to do is walk:

- Change your route regularly.
- Alternate the terrain. Find some trails, walk through the park, find hills or take short cuts.
- Do interval training (example: walk fast for 2 minutes, walk slow for 3 minutes).
- Get a dog and take it for walks.

There are also many exercise tools that you can use. Most gyms and stores have more equipment than you will ever need. Ask around and try some new pieces of equipment. Lifting weights on an exercise ball or doing crunches on a Bosu can radically improve your strength and coordination. Using wobble boards and balancing tools can improve your running skills. If you are bored of running, try the rowing machine or elliptical machine.

If you don't belong to a gym, most of these tools are inexpensive and can be found at your local Target or sporting goods store.

Get Outdoors

People go on all types of vacations. On those vacations people rest and relax some of the time, but a lot of vacations people take the time to explore new areas. They find themselves walking, hiking, skiing, swimming, etc. Why do people wait to do these activities until they're on vacation? Get outside and enjoy the outdoors by:

- Backpacking
- Biking
- Canoeing
- Climbing
- Hiking
- Mountain Biking
- Rafting
- Rollerblading
- Running
- Skiing
- Snow Boarding
- Swimming
- Walking
- Walking the dog
- Waterskiing

Play Games and Sports

Many sports, such as basketball and soccer are great activities that anyone can play. You just need a ball, a local park and an opponent. Other popular sports are tennis, racquetball, and football. Many people are scared to play, because they were never good as a kid or it has been so long that they have lost their touch. Who Cares! Find a friend and go have a good time.

If you have kids, play with them. When was the last time you played tag? I guarantee it will increase your heart rate. Just be careful not to over do it. Getting outside and playing with the family is not only a great bonding time, you can get in shape and have fun at the same time. Go to the park and play football, Frisbee, or even kickball.

Myth #2

The Number Two Exercise Myth: Exercising hurts.

The Truth: Exercise does not have to hurt. In fact exercise can help decrease and prevent pain.

You may see people make grunting noises and funny faces as they work out, or even complain about sore muscles afterward. While some people interpret this as painful, in most cases it is not. It is true that people get sore after working out, but it is not the same type of pain. It is a soreness that you know is beneficial. In fact, many people like this soreness. It is possible to have painful soreness, if you workout too much or stress yourself too hard. This often happens when people try lifting heavy weights when just starting to exercise.

I hear the most complaints about running. Many say it hurts to run. I then ask them to describe the pain. If it is a painful joint or muscle pain, I then try to figure out the cause of the pain and try to correct it. If you feel this type of pain, I recommend getting it examined, and in the meanwhile do a different exercise.

However, when I ask people to describe the pain, a common response is that it is hard to breathe and they get cramps. The reason for this is that they are trying to perform an exercise beyond their aerobic capacity. If you are experiencing this type of pain, back off the intensity. If it hurts to run, start off walking and gradually increase to fast walking mixed in with some light jogging. People are able to get into great shape by walking if done properly.

Our bodies were designed for movement. Movement is what keeps our joints working, our heart and arteries healthy, our immune systems strong and our minds clear. Many people think it is just good for your heart, but it is simply not true. Aerobic exercise helps prevent arthritis and degenerative disc disease. It helps all our organs function more efficiently. It also stimulates the nervous system and keeps our minds healthy.

In my early college years, I worked in a nursing home. I would see elderly people who needed some help with their daily activities admitted to the facility by their families. These elderly parents were usually very coherent and intellectually present. What was noticeable to me was that there were many who stopped doing physical activity and would sit around all day and quickly digress. They would start by forgetting things, soon followed by incontinence and dementia. However there were others who went on daily walks and engaged themselves in multiple activities. These people showed very little signs of aging.

The fact is that our bodies need exercise more than ever. We live in a sedentary world with fast food and remote controls. It is no wonder why two-thirds of the population is overweight and healthcare costs continue to rise.

Myth #3

The Number Three Exercise Myth: Exercise takes hours, and you have to work out daily.

The Truth: You can benefit greatly exercising 3-4 days a week for 30 to 60 minutes.

You can exercise 3 to 4 days a week and see great results if done properly. There are many people at the gym who work out daily for a couple hours a day. They typically get on the treadmill (bike, elliptical, etc) and do their cardio workout for 45 minutes to one hour. They can then spend another hour lifting weights. The sad truth is that many of these people are not seeing the results they want.

Their problem is efficiency. Many of them are wasting time between sets and resting too long. They are also not mixing up their workouts and so their bodies have reached a plateau. For more information on plateaus and increasing efficiency while exercising visit www.DoctorForTotalHealth.com. In the *Obtaining Wellness* section of the website there are tips about exercise in addition to nutrition, goal setting and time management.

Three quick tips are:

1. Mix resistance training with aerobic training. To lose weight, get fit and stay healthy, the body needs both types of exercise.
2. When doing resistance training, spend very little time between sets (5-10 seconds).
3. While performing your aerobic workout start focusing on your heart rate. Trying working out at about 75% to 85% of your MHR (Maximum Heart Rate) For more information on MHR visit the exercise section from the *Obtaining Wellness* page @ www.DoctorForTotalHealth.com.

Myth #4

The Number Four Exercise Myth: Exercise can be performed only in a gym or with expensive home exercise equipment.

The Truth: There are many ways to exercise at home. Purchasing equipment such as exercise balls and bands is very inexpensive and allows you to work multiple muscle groups.

One of the most popular exercise classes offered at gyms and health clubs across the country are Boot Camp classes. Boot Camp exercise classes provide a total body workout with very minimal equipment. They incorporate crunches, pushups, lunges, jumping jacks to provide for a great

workout. If you think you need a lot of extensive equipment to get a great total body workout, I encourage you to attend a local boot camp class.

In these Boot Camp classes they can also use exercise balls, elastic bands and weighted balls. All these pieces of equipment are very inexpensive and can provide hundreds of different types of exercise. In fact, many times you buy such equipment, they come with a DVD and booklets for exercise ideas.

There are also many great workout videos to try. If you don't want to purchase them, go to your local library. Most libraries have exercise videos to check out for free (Buns of Steel, 8-minute Abs, Tae Bo, etc).

Myth #5

The Number Five Exercise Myth: Exercise is for young and healthy people. It is too late for me to start. (It is too complicated to start an effective program.)

The Truth: It is never too late.

While everyone agrees that exercise is healthy, many people feel that it is too hard and complicated to start a program. People often use the excuse that they are too old to start to see any real benefits. These beliefs are simply not true.

I recently met a 71 year old man who decided to start running in his mid-sixties. He has run 5 marathons since. You are never too old or out of shape to start an exercise program.

In fact exercise can help you stay young. As mentioned in myth number two, exercise is beneficial for your heart, lungs, organs, immune system, bones, nervous system and brain. Weight bearing exercise is the number one recommendation to prevent osteoporosis. Aerobic exercise is the number one recommendation to prevent heart disease and diabetes. Routine exercise allows your body to work more efficiently, thus slowing down the aging process.

The secret is to start gradually and have a plan. Without a plan, your chances of quitting are very high.

If you currently do not perform any physical exercise, you can see great health benefits by going for a walk 3 times a week. This is not complicated and just about anyone can do it. Planning doesn't need to be complicated. Simply dedicating 3 – 4 days a week to go for a walk is a plan. The key to planning is to actually scheduling your exercise into your week. Get a planner and schedule the time and activity you will be doing.

Conclusion:

In order to make exercise work, you must make it a part of your life. Ways to help you do this are to explore these 5 common myths and find ways to have a little more fun while working out. In addition, I highly encourage you to set health goals. When having a goal to reach, you are able to stay motivated and excited. For more information on goal setting, I again encourage you

to visit the *Obtaining Wellness* section of www.DoctorForTotalHealth.com. In this section there are tips on how to effectively set goals.

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