

Your Perfect Workout

By Debi Silber, MS, RD, WHC The Mojo Coach®

What does your perfect workout mean? Is it a stroll in the park, taking a class, a rigorous hour of tennis, or using the Stairmaster during your favorite TV show? Maybe it means focusing on your breath in a yoga class, stretching your muscles with Pilates or running to your favorite songs. While any of these workouts benefit your body, mind and soul, many moms don't exercise at all. In fact, the only exercise they're getting is when they exercise their right...not to exercise.

If this sounds like you, it's time to find your perfect workout. But what if you haven't worked out in weeks, months, even years? What matters is that you find something that you can enjoy. What also matters is that you begin at a level that's only slightly more challenging than what you feel you can do. This way, you don't scare yourself off from beginning and sticking with a new routine. It's also a great way to build confidence in yourself. By setting a goal that's reasonable, then achieving that goal, you gain the confidence to keep trying. It's an empowering feeling to take back the reins and know that your fitness, health and priorities are up to you.

Now like many moms, let's say you haven't exercised in an embarrassingly long time. You're never ending to-do list got the best of you and the only way you could get everything done was by cutting your own self care right off your list. So unfortunately, your exercise was one of the first things to go. This may have worked for a while but at some point, you began to feel sluggish, lethargic and unfit. Maybe you noticed that your clothes weren't fitting as well as they used to. You may have realized that while you used to sprint up the steps, now you're huffing and puffing as you near the top. Whatever caused you to see that you need exercise in your life doesn't matter, as long as you use that information to get going. So, where do you begin?

You can always start with walking. You know how to do it, you don't need to be exceptionally coordinated and all you need is a properly fitting pair of walking shoes. Just by getting outside, looking at the changing leaves or noticing the beauty that surrounds you may be enough to keep you motivated to walk. If that's not enough, you can bring an iPod or MP3 player to listen to your favorite music. There are also some great services, which enable you to download workouts according to your workout level and needs. You can even download podcasts of programs you enjoy or just use the time as an opportunity to clear your head.

Now it doesn't matter if you work outside the home, have a newborn, whatever. You can justify or make excuses for anything you don't want to do. The idea is to find a way to get it done so you can

feel good again. For example, if you leave early in the morning and head off to work, you can have a gym bag packed and head to the gym before you come home. If you feel too guilty to try it maybe realizing that the happier mom is, the better she is for everyone else is enough to change your mind. You can also try exercising during your lunch break, taking a short walking break every hour or find an exercise buddy you can walk with and be accountable to.

If you have young children, there are some other strategies you may want to try. Get on that treadmill in your home, use tapes, DVD's or just tune into your local exercise channel. Just simply put your baby in an area safely nearby. Your baby may even get a real kick out of watching his or her mommy working out. If not, he or she can use the time to sleep, snack or play. If your children are a little older, give them a special activity that they only get to do while mommy works out. They'll look forward to the activity while you get your workout in.

If you want to workout outside, there are great exercise joggers that allow you to walk, jog or run with your child safely strapped in. You can also wear your baby in a Baby Bjorn or baby backpack. This adds weighted resistance to your workout while taking away any excuse you may have! Your baby will also love the special time feeling close to you while getting some fresh air. Another option is to join a class for moms and their kids. If that doesn't work for you, many health clubs offer babysitting for a small fee. Lastly, you can hire a babysitter or find a friend that is willing to take turns babysitting each others children so you can both make the time for much needed self care. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you do something.

The key is to find a way to incorporate exercise back into your life. If you do nothing now and exercise for fifteen minutes tomorrow, you're moving in the right direction. What's most important is that you give your body, mind and soul what it so rightfully deserves. And as you begin to feel better about your body and your commitment to take better care of yourself, your body will kindly respond by slowly getting back to being the finely tuned machine it had been long ago. Then at some point, you may see the beauty in you that everyone else does.



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