



Well-Being Dimension: Physical Activity

When you think about your physical well-being, what comes to mind? Do you feel vibrant and energized? Do you have a spring in your step? Do you feel strong and confident that your energy will enable you to tackle the day ahead with ease? Or, do you feel run down and sluggish? Are you dragging yourself through the day with thoughts of how much you have to get done and when you'll be able to get home and get back in bed? Do you feel like you run out of energy to do the things that really matter to you...the things you enjoy doing just for you, that add joy and meaning to your life?

To support our best energy and physical well-being, we require physical activity, a healthy, whole foods based diet and adequate rest. Now you may be thinking, "I know I should be more active, eat better and get more sleep, but my life is so crazy. I have no time and no energy. How can I possibly add these things to my already packed schedule?". The good news is that it may be easier than you think.

Let's tackle the physical activity piece. Many of us falsely believe that if we don't do thirty or sixty minutes of vigorous activity, then there is no benefit. We may feel that for it to "count" as exercise we have to go to the gym, take a jog or walk at a pace that we can barely sustain. We may look at exercise as a chore, another thing on our already full schedule. These false beliefs, along with the reasons we think we want to be more active (i.e. health), may be setting us up for failure, or what Michelle Segar, PhD, MPH, behavioral sustainability scientist and author of "No Sweat: How the simple science of motivation can bring you a lifetime of fitness" calls the vicious cycle of failure (1). You can [read more about Michelle's work here.](#)

To move into the the sustainable cycle of success we've got to figure out the right why (1). The right why is how physical activity will benefit us today...our present self. We need to first start thinking about physical activity as a gift that we can give ourselves today. What are some of the immediate benefits or gifts you get from being active? More energy? More self-confidence? A feeling of accomplishment? A way to connect with others? Being a good role model to your kids? Fun? If you are interested in exploring your right why, a qualified health coach can help you do that. You can access free, confidential health coaching through your Cigna benefits plan at www.mycigna.com.

Physical activity is one of the best gifts we can give ourselves. It is a gift that supports all domains of our well-being. We don't need to do thirty or sixty minutes and it doesn't have to be



hard or uncomfortable. Small bursts of movement throughout the day can be fun and energizing and can add up to big results. [Check out this blog post](#) about how doing the “minimum effective dose” of physical activity can net you better results over the long run.

Look for ways to be more active throughout your day. Prime your brain to seek out these opportunities by asking yourself, “how can I fit some activity into my day today?”. You’ll be surprised at how many opportunities present themselves if you look for them. Be prepared to take advantage of these opportunities. Check out your school’s well-being or HR website to find resources on campus. Keep an extra pair of sneakers at work or in your car. Suggest a walking meeting with a coworker or supervisor. Take a five or ten minute walk outside in the afternoon to replenish your energy. Take advantage of a lunchtime group fitness class offered at your worksite. You can find some other great ideas for how to incorporate activity into your day [here](#).

You have the potential to live a high energy life. You can be the person who wakes up excited to tackle the day, the person who others look up to for her vigor and zest for life. The biggest changes can start from the seemingly small habits we create. Find a way to make physical activity fun. Take advantage of small increments of time to be active and you’ll be amazed at you’ll feel and how you’ll perform at work and at home.

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References:

- 1) Segar, M., (2015). *No sweat: How the simple science of motivation can bring you a lifetime of fitness*. Nashville, TN: Harper Collins.

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