



# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EXERCISE

**PRESENTED BY YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE  
AND WORKLIFE PROGRAMS**

January 14, 2026

# OBJECTIVES



- Understand the benefits of regular exercise
- Learn four principles for successful exercise habits
- Discover practical strategies for staying active during work hours
- Explore different types of exercise and their specific benefits
- Develop a personalized approach to fitness that fits your lifestyle

# THE BENEFITS OF REGULAR EXERCISE

## – Increased physical health

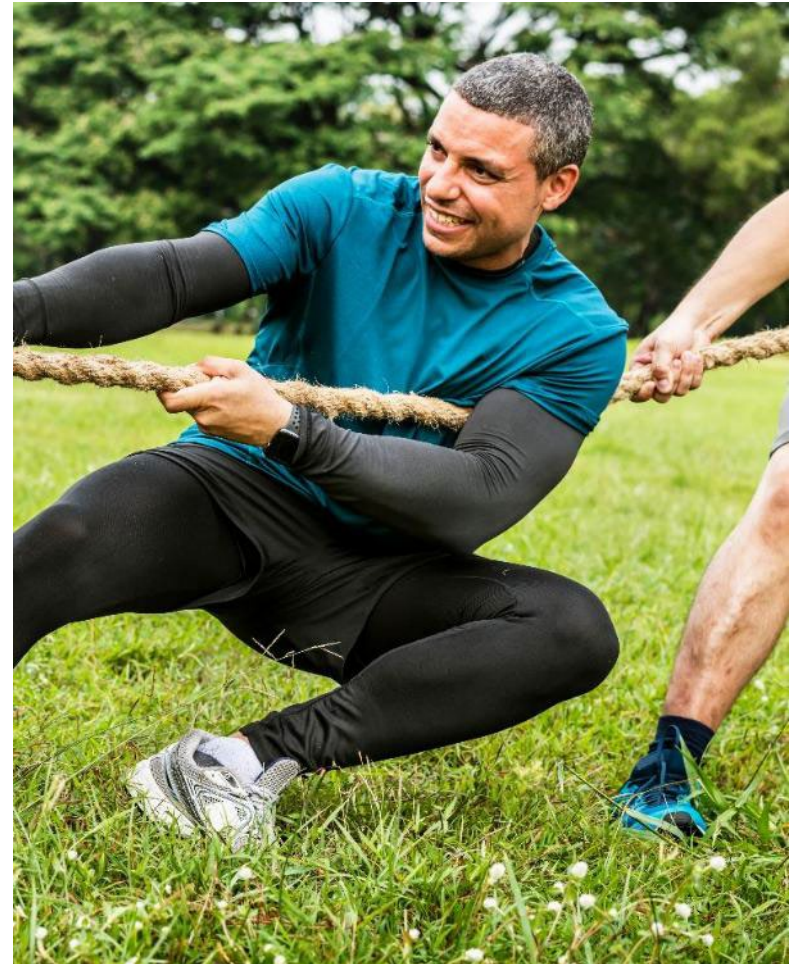
- Build strength, endurance, and energy
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Enhance sleep quality
- Develop physical resilience that supports daily activities and long-term health

## – Improved mental health

- Sharpen brain function and focus
- Reduce anxiety and manage stress
- Strengthen relationships

## – Injury and illness prevention

- Defend against ailments and diseases



# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LASTING CHANGE



To activate the mental pathways that turn exercise into a habit, it should be done:

- **Often (most days of the week)**  
Frequent movement teaches your brain that activity is normal
- **Correctly**  
Good technique prevents setbacks, which helps you feel capable and makes the routine easier to stick with
- **With a great attitude**  
Choosing to view exercise as energizing and enjoyable helps it become exactly that
- **While keeping track**  
Monitoring your progress shows you what's working and keeps you motivated

# EXERCISE OFTEN

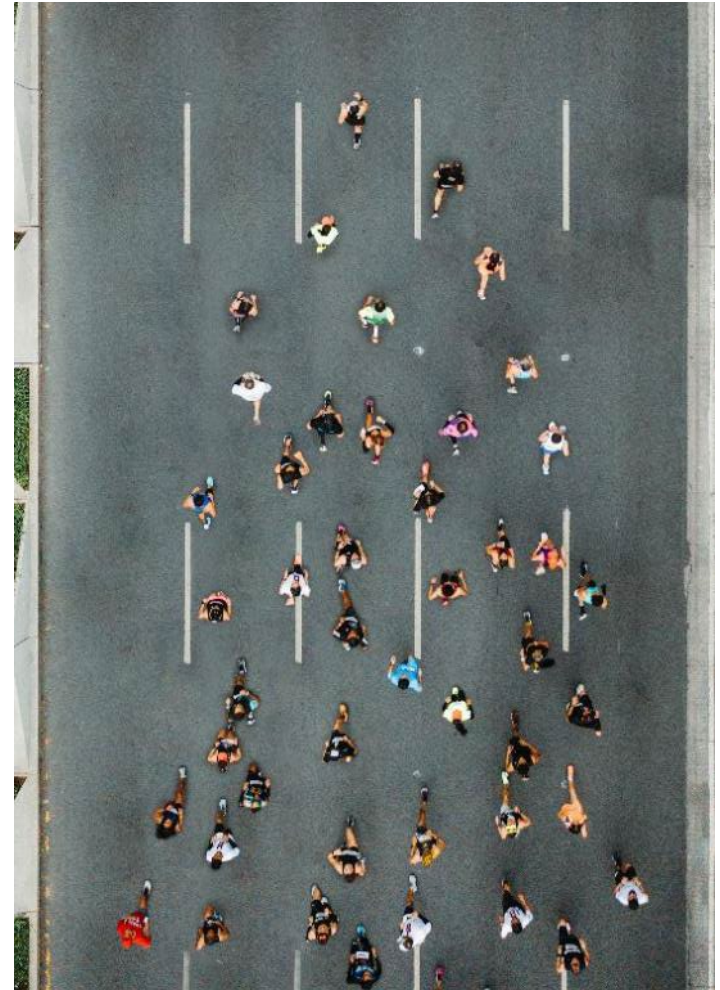
The key is to be active every day, even if it's just a short walk or stretch session



- 4-7 days per week
  - Consistency builds lasting habits and sustainable results
- 20-120 minutes per session
  - Adjust the duration based on your goals and schedule

# EXERCISE CORRECTLY

- **Prepare through learning**
  - Read, watch guided online classes, or work with a coach or trainer to understand proper techniques
- **Be open to trying new things**
  - Embrace variety and challenge
  - Every expert was once a beginner who kept practicing
- **Focus on progress, not perfection**
  - Expect improvement over time rather than flawless execution from day one
  - Small gains compound into major achievements



# ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE



“Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right.”

– Henry Ford

- **Decide that exercise is good**
  - Make a conscious choice to view exercise as beneficial and necessary, not a punishment
- **Pursue your interests**
  - Choose activities you genuinely enjoy
- **Keep the end goal in mind**
  - Remember why you started — whether it’s energy, strength, or confidence, let your “why” drive you forward

# SET GOALS

- **Decide what you want to accomplish**
  - Set specific, measurable goals
  - Example: “Run a 5k in three months” is more actionable than “Get fit”
- **Schedule workouts like important appointments**
  - Treat exercise like you would a work meeting – put it in your calendar and honor the commitment
- **Use supportive resources**
  - Leverage apps, workout buddies, clubs, and teams
- **Track your progress**
  - Monitoring improvements maintains motivation and shows results



# STAY ACTIVE DURING WORK HOURS

Transform sedentary work time into opportunities for movement



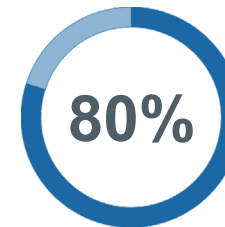
- **Take walking meetings**  
Conduct phone calls or one-on-one check-ins while walking
- **Stretch at your desk**  
Simple neck, shoulder, and back stretches can be done discreetly throughout the day
- **Strength train between tasks**  
Use resistance bands or bodyweight exercises in your office or a private space during breaks
- **Move every 20-30 minutes**  
Set reminders to stand, stretch, or walk to prevent stiffness and maintain energy

# PRIORITIZE NUTRITION



**You can't out-exercise a bad diet. Nutrition and fitness work together in your health journey.**

## Weight management



Depends on eating habits rather than exercise alone

## Consider this:

You can consume a 500-calorie muffin in four minutes, but it could take two hours of exercise to burn off!

Healthy foods provide the energy and strength your body needs for effective workouts.

# ESTABLISH WELL-ROUNDED WORKOUT PLANS

A complete fitness routine that addresses all aspects of physical health should include:



## Cardio

Cardiovascular endurance for heart and lung health



## Strength

Muscle-building and bone density improvement



## Flexibility

Range of motion and injury prevention



## Balance

Stability and fall prevention, especially as we age

# CARDIO AND STRENGTH TRAINING

## Cardio

- Makes you huff and puff in a positive way
- Strengthens heart, lungs, and muscle endurance
- Aim for 15-20 minutes minimum per workout

**Try:** Running, cycling, swimming, dancing, and soccer



## Strength

- Builds muscle strength and overall sturdiness
- Makes you more capable in daily activities
- Work each muscle group regularly

**Try:** Weights, resistance bands, pushups, and kettlebells

# FLEXIBILITY AND BALANCE TRAINING

## Flexibility

- Increases muscle elasticity and range of motion
- Reduces injury risk and chronic pain
- May cause mild discomfort during stretching (in a good way!), so ease into it at first

**Try:** Stretching routines, yoga, Pilates, or martial arts



## Balance

- Prevents dangerous falls
- Critical for adults 65+ (falls are the leading cause of injury)
- Start with simple single-leg stands, holding for 10-20 seconds per side

**Try:** BOSU balls, balance disks, and stability exercises

# SIMPLE DAILY STRETCHES

Can be performed at your desk, in the hallway, or anywhere you need quick relief



## – Neck release

- Gently tilt your head to one side, bringing your ear toward your shoulder
- Hold 15 to 20 seconds, then switch sides

## – Wrist and finger flex

- Extend one arm forward, palm facing up
- With your other hand, gently pull your fingers back toward your body
- Hold 15 to 20 seconds, then switch hands

# SITTING STRETCHES

Perfect for when you can't leave your workspace



## – Upper back stretch

- Interlace fingers, push forward, and round your upper back
- Hold 15 to 30 seconds

## – Seated side bend

- Sit tall, reach an arm overhead, and lean to one side
- Hold 15 to 20 seconds, switch sides, and repeat

## – Shoulder stretch

- Pull one arm across your chest with the opposite hand
- Hold 15 to 30 seconds per side

# STANDING STRETCHES

Keep your energy up throughout the day with these quick standing stretches, perfect for a short break



- **Standing quad stretch**
  - Pull foot to glutes, using support if needed
  - Hold 15 to 30 seconds
- **Hamstring stretch**
  - Extend one leg forward, hinge at the hips
  - Hold 15 to 30 seconds
- **Calf stretch**
  - Step back, press down heel, and lean forward
  - Hold 15 to 30 seconds

# NEXT STEPS

Create a fitness plan that aligns with your goals, fits your schedule, and includes activities you enjoy.



Choose ONE workplace movement strategy to try this week



Set a specific, measurable goal using the SMART framework



Track your progress and notice the psychological benefits



Remember: the mind-body connection starts with a single step

# KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Exercise transforms both physical and mental well-being
- Success requires consistency, proper form, positive attitude, and progress tracking
- Include cardio, strength, flexibility, and balance training for a comprehensive fitness approach
- Proper nutrition is important for weight management
- Simple workplace stretches can combat sedentary lifestyle effects, keeping you limber and energized

# RESOURCES

## Books

- Atomic Habits: An Easy and Proven Way to Build Good Habits and Break Bad Ones
  - James Clear, 2020
- The Psychology of Exercise: Integrating Theory and Practice
  - Curt Lox, 2019
- The Deskercise Guide: Office-Friendly Workouts for Busy Professionals
  - Calvin Felix, 2025

## Fitness Apps

- [MyFitnessPal](#)
- [Nike Training Club](#)
- [Strava](#)

## Podcasts

- [The Model Health Show](#)
- [The Mind Pump Podcast](#)
- [FoundMyFitness](#)

# THANK YOU



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