

# Fitting Fitness Into Your Busy Lifestyle

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We don't live in a lazy world, yet study after study seems to say that, as a people, we are getting lazier. But is this laziness measured against the schedules of two decades ago, or against the maddening demands of today's quick paced world? Either way, the results seem to speak for themselves. Americans (among others) are getting fatter, and quick fix weight loss solutions are doing little to stop the tide of problems. But the problem doesn't seem to be that we are lazy, but that we simply do not have time to exercise and get the foods we need to stay fit and trim.

Consider the average American's lifestyle. Let's say they are married, with a couple of kids, and a full-time job. First thing in the morning, what time is there for breakfast? There is barely enough time to get up, feed the kids, and get ready to go to work. Work goes until around lunchtime, when there is usually just enough time to grab something from a fast food restaurant, or perhaps just snack on something quick the person happened to bring to work that day. After work means corralling the kids and making them do their homework, finally perhaps finding the time to prepare and eat a home cooked meal, and then maybe getting some time to relax around 7:00 or 8:00 at night. Is it really fair to label someone who doesn't want to go to the gym at this point lazy? We're talking about the first breath of free time they've had since they woke up that morning. Chances are, bedtime will come around 11:00, if not earlier. Add

an hour and a half of gym time, and that leaves just an hour and a half or so each day to do only what they want to do. It's madness.

Thankfully, there are solutions to the problems presented herein. If your schedule looks something like this, you can still find the time to exercise and eat right. Don't shake your head and throw up your arms. Others are doing it and so can you. To help you, we've devised a nice little list of tips to help you conquer the demons of a busy lifestyle and get back into the shape you've been missing since work and family took over your life. Ready? Let's get into it!

### **Tip #1: Plan Your Fitness Schedule**

One of the biggest mistakes people tend to make when trying to get back into shape is failing to make a good plan at the outset. This is very important. It can seem overwhelming to get to the end of a day that looks similar to the above example and even consider the possibility of going to the gym. That's why you can't wait until that time to think about it. Take an hour or so on a Saturday afternoon, grab a pen and a piece of paper, and find the holes in your schedule. You may not believe them to be there, but chances dictate that they are. But trying to find them during one of your busy days is no good. You have to do it ahead of time, when you're not stressed, and you feel like you have enough energy to take on the world.

And what about those weekends, anyway? Fitness experts recommend that we get at least three days a week of vigorous exercise. Well, there's two days staring you right in the face (assuming you have the luxury of a couple of days off a week). These are two days when you don't have to worry about finding tiny holes in your schedule to plan a work out. The whole day (more or less) is yours to plan the way you see fit. Surely there's an hour in there for some exercise.

One contrary note before we move on. If you're of a certain personality type, you can get carried away in the planning stages. You're sitting there on a Saturday afternoon, you've got your feet up, and you're probably enjoying some kind of not-so-healthy snack. In this moment, though, you're determined to change things around starting on Monday. So you begin planning the ultimate fitness and dieting routine for yourself. By the time you're finished, you've got a routine that would make an Olympic athlete run in the opposite direction. It all seems very doable when you've got a couple of days before starting. It will seem less so on Monday. Don't go overboard on the planning. Make small adjustments. If, after a couple of weeks you feel that you can take on more, go ahead and add some more. But take it easy to begin with.

## **Tip #2: Make Your Commute Your Exercise**

Do you drive to work, even though it's only a couple of miles away? If the only path to work is through a busy highway with nothing in the way of sidewalks, or if you

work on the other side of town, that might be unavoidable. If it happens to be practical, however, walking or bicycling to work can be a great way to get your cardio in without even making a special concession.

Granted, this tip isn't for everyone. If you work in a law firm, the partners probably aren't going to want to see you locking up your bicycle in front of the building each day before settling in with a client. If you work at Wal-Mart, however, it might just be okay. Obviously, you have to take this into consideration, but if it works for you, why not give it a try?

### **Tip #3: Don't Trivialize the Workout**

Back to the schedule again. You've made your schedule, and it's Monday. Time to get cracking. Hmm. . . something has come up that wasn't previously considered. Your automatic reflex will be to cross the workout off the schedule. Don't do that, if it's at all possible. You have to treat your workout as a high priority piece of your life now. Don't make the mistake of making it the first to go every time you have to adjust your schedule. You deserve your exercise, and you won't get anywhere if you continually make it the sacrificial lamb to the lion of unexpected happenings.

On the other hand, sometimes it can't be avoided. If the only mobile things on your schedule are cooking dinner for your kids or getting to go workout, there's not a lot of

choice in the matter after all. Still, that doesn't mean the end of the world. As soon as you make up your mind that the traditional workout you had planned will have to go by the wayside, start thinking about ways to replace it. We'll get to a couple of those ways in the tips to follow, but you don't have to feel limited by those suggestions. Find replacements of your own. Can't go to the gym? Maybe you could do some things around the house for a half hour or so to make up for it.

#### **Tip #4: Recruit Your Friends and Family**

That's right, it's time to get your husband or wife, your kids, and your coworkers and friends in on the action. One thing that people have a tendency to do is keep their weight loss and fitness plans to themselves, at least for a while. This is especially true if you've tried to get in shape in the past with limited success. This time, shout it from the heavens. Let everyone you come in contact with know that you are trying to lose weight, that you are on a new fitness plan, and you would appreciate any help you can get.

Now, what can you expect from this proclamation? Well, there will be lots and lots of advice, to begin with. Some of it will be wanted, most not. Don't take offense to any of these suggestions and helpful hints, and don't discard them out of hand, either. If you hear something that seems to make some sense, do your own research and decide whether to incorporate it or discard it. After all, free advice never hurt anyone, and your friends' feelings

won't be as hurt as you think if you decide not to use theirs.

What's much, much better is all the interest and support you will get. People love to see others struggle to do something. It's just something in our natures. True, there will be those who are secretly rooting for you to fail, but this should just provide you with that much more motivation to prove them wrong and shove it in their faces (metaphorically speaking, of course).

Finally, it may come to some very practical good. Others may see your enthusiasm and want to join in. Also, you can use them to help you find new and interesting ways to work out. Find a running partner, a gym partner, a dieting partner. The only thing is: don't depend on anyone else for your success. If you find someone that wants to start going to the gym with you, for instance, don't stay home just because they start slacking off. Go anyway. Be the inspirational leader, not the follower.

### **Tip #5: TV—Don't Be a Couch Potato**

There are some that say watching too much TV is like eating too much candy. Only instead of rotting our teeth, it is rotting our brains. Whether or not this is true is not the focus of this article, however. If you like to watch TV in the evenings, there's no reason—from a fitness perspective—why you should stop. But think about it. Is what you're watching really so complex that you couldn't

be doing something else at the same time? If you have the same basic programming that we have, the answer is most definitely no. So why not use the time to get some exercise!

This is the perfect solution for those days where you can't fit the gym into your schedule. If you have a treadmill, roll it out in front of the TV and do a half hour or more while you watch your evening programs. Chances are it will make the treadmill go by that much easier and you won't be missing anything in the process. If you don't have a treadmill, get down on the floor and do some pushups, sit-ups, dips, and anything else you can think of to get some strength training in while you watch the tube. Even if the exercise isn't that great, it sure beats sitting on the couch eating potato chips.

### **Tip #6: Three Meals a Day is Not Cool Anymore**

The old three meals a day rule was first discarded by champion bodybuilders in the early to late seventies. These massive mountains of muscle discovered they would have to eat much more frequently if they wanted to get in the amount of calories and protein each day that would help them to continue to grow and pack on lean body mass. It was not until the late nineties, however,

that this approach to nutrition spread beyond the bodybuilding world and was chosen by most leading dieticians as the best method of approach.

Many leading nutrition experts recommend that you eat at least four to six small meals a day, rather than three big ones. Of course, this will be even more of a stretch for many of you, who are used to skipping at least one of those three already. To go from eating twice a day (meals, that is) to eating six times a day takes some getting used to. But when you really think about your eating habits, you probably aren't changing a whole lot. Think about how many times you actually eat each day. This includes every time you have a sugary soda or a pack of M&Ms or a pint of ice cream. Simply replace these snacks on the go with a well balanced small meal and you will be far more satisfied, you'll prevent yourself from ever getting uncontrollably hungry, and you'll keep your metabolism burning like a five alarm fire.

### **Tip #7: Remember That Consistency Is Key**

Don't get discouraged. Remember that the pathway to getting out of shape was a long and winding one, and the pathway back will take a long time as well. Did you freak out every time you accidentally got some exercise or ate a balanced and nutritious meal on the way to getting out of shape? Of course not. Nor should you do anything of the sort if you eat some pizza or skip a workout every now and again on the path to getting back into shape. These things happen and they are a part of being human. If you were perfect, you'd have no reason to be reading this report in the first place. Take every misstep in stride and remember that success will come by being consistent over the long haul, not by staying perfect each and every day along the way. Have fun and enjoy yourself, and take your time. You'll be at your goals before you know it!