



Exercise – Let’s Be Real There are those of us who hate it.

Was working out hard at first, but much easier when you kept at it? Is that 1 hour block of exercise time one of the highlights of your day? The solitude, the endorphins, the personal satisfaction of just knowing you’re doing something good for your body – do those benefits motivate you to push harder and get more out of your workout? If so, you are to be admired for your will power and strength, and this article is not for you.

Let me be completely honest and forthright: I *hate* to exercise. That energized, endorphin charged sense of accomplishment that I hear so many avid gym-goers talk about has apparently been lost on me. The only part I like about a work out session is when the seemingly never ending 45 minutes are up, and I’m able to give my wheezing, red body permission to stumble off of the elliptical. And yeah, I feel pretty good once the dry heaves and oxygen deprivation subside... for about 22 hours. Then it’s the day after the workout and I am waddling around in pain, tipping off my friends and coworkers that: Yes, I did work out... and, No, I don’t exercise on a regular basis.

If you share my lack of enthusiasm for a good sweat-fest on the treadmill, you might be surprised to know that you aren’t alone. In fact, you are a part of the majority. According to the Gallup poll in 2004, only 12% of Americans claim to engage in vigorous exercise at least five days a week. And by “vigorous exercise”, we aren’t talking about running a decathlon; for the purposes of this poll, vigorous exercise was defined as – “at least 20 minutes of sports or physical activities that cause large increases in heart rate, or breathing.” You aren’t alone! Exercise, for most, is simply not enjoyable, but it *is* essential in maintaining a good quality of life. So, my fellow loather of the ab machine, we must grin and bear it, but here are some tips that may make the work out slightly more bearable, and even for some (gasp!) enjoyable:

1. Don’t kill yourself!

A work out may be tough, but it’s not supposed to be suicide. Some people think that working out for 2 or 3 hours straight, covers them for the rest of the week. Sure, they may hyperventilate or pass out, but at least they can check off the “exercise” part of their to-do list. If this is you, STOP! Not only is this type of binge exercising dangerous, but it’s also inefficient. Break up your exercise over the week. Try 20 to 30 minutes of cardio three times a week, and then work out a set of muscles, alternating days to allow for healing time. This will prevent over-exertion, and you’ll be more likely to keep up the routine.

2. Do something you like!

I don't know why, but running half a mile seems so much more worth while when I'm kicking a ball around, than on a stationary machine with a belt (I feel a bit too much like a pet rodent). Exercise doesn't have to be boring. You can get together with some friends for a game of pick up basketball, or bring a group to dance lessons at the local gyms (I hear that some of the newer exercise classes even involve poles), anything that gets your heart rate up steadily for 20-30 minutes is great; and no, bowling does not suffice. So pick up your phones, call up some buddies, and get outside for a good game of touch football!

3. The buddy system!

The well known phrase, "misery loves company", has never proved truer than in a work out. When you have someone to encourage, as well as go through the same physical strain you are, it is much easier to endure. You will also be much less likely skip out on an early morning exercise session when you've got a buddy telling you to get your lazy butt out of bed, and to the gym. Who knows it may not only strengthen your body, but your friendship as well!

4. There is always tomorrow!

Finally – Never give up. If you missed 3 out of the 5 days last week, focus on the fact that you worked out for twice in one week and shoot for three the next. Muscles have great memory and will respond to any amount of attention received.

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15052 Ronnie Drive, Suite 100 ~ Dade City, FL 33523
Ph. 352.567.2200 ~ Fx. 352.567.2257 ~ www.SouthPacificTrading.com