



Module Eight

MOVEMENT &
ACTIVE LIVING





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INTRODUCTION

This week, we're going to find ways to get you moving! When you're dealing with a chronic illness, you often go through periods where you're symptom free... only to have sudden onsets of flare ups. Because of this, you may avoid exercise because it's difficult to find the motivation and energy to be active. However, keeping active can be extremely beneficial to your overall quality of life.

So, we're going to begin by learning about the concepts of natural movement and opportunistic exercise. Then we'll look at your mindset around being more active, and then some strategies for making exercise a habit and creating a plan that works for you, your lifestyle, and your chronic illness.

Ready? Let's go.



NATURAL MOVEMENT & OPPORTUNISTIC EXERCISE

So what do I mean by natural movement and opportunistic exercise? Well, this is all about inviting natural movement throughout the day, without making a big fuss over it, like it's not a big event, it's just how you live.

It's about adding movement to your life that doesn't seem like "exercise."

You're adding movement to your everyday activities, or looking at how you can do your daily tasks in a way that makes them more active. When you become an opportunistic exerciser, you strengthen your chances of staying with it for the long-haul.

It's important to keep in mind that something is better than nothing. Viewing activity in this way helps you to get out of the all-or-nothing mindset, which diminishes the chances of sticking with any sort of exercise routine.

Even small amounts of physical activity can provide positive health benefits. While regular exercise is the best way to receive the health-promoting benefits of physical activity, it can often be a challenge to make time for a lengthy workout.. or simply seem like a daunting task to find the energy to exercise through the pain and fatigue. If you can't make it into a gym or go for a walk or bike ride, that's no reason for despair.

Brief periods of physical activity throughout the day can still provide numerous health benefits.

Start by thinking about where you are everyday - work, home, and with friends and family - and how you can add a little “something” to each place and activity.

What it often comes down to is making things a little less convenient for yourself. Truth is, modernization can be both a blessing and a curse. Everything these days have been upgraded with easy-to-use machines or appliances, making life easier in many ways, but there’s definitely a downside. Technology often reduces our opportunities to be physically active throughout the day.

The more we move, the more we're able to improve pain & discomfort, our physical health, mental health, and even just our overall quality of life.

Here are some examples:

- Plant & tend a garden
- Wash your own car (instead of using the car wash)
- Opt for taking the stairs whenever possible to engage in some extra cardiovascular exercise and strengthen leg muscles
- Do bicep curls with a shampoo bottle while you brush your teeth
- Choose parking spots at a distance from entrances to encourage more walking
- Do calf raises while you talk on the phone (or just walk around)
- Do some gentle seated stretches during TV commercials



And there are so many other ways. Often what it comes down to is just making things a little less convenient for yourself, and also just being mindful of whenever you're stationary or sitting down ... find a way to get up and move or find modified seated exercises that can still help engage you.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What are 2-3 ways I could add “natural movement” into my day?





LEARNING TO LOVE MOVEMENT

Part of this whole approach is developing a love for physical activity.

And people really can learn to love physical activity, even if they don't start out that way.

Learning to love the feeling of being active, the feeling of moving your body, stretching your muscles, feeling your heart beat faster.... it's definitely a sensation you can come to savor and look forward to.

But it starts with your mindset.

Instead of approaching physical movement with a sense of dread, try a more positive affirmation instead, "I am proud of what my body can do."

If you notice yourself saying things like "Ugh. I hate to exercise," try stopping yourself from having this story. What you tell yourself is what your mind believes. So if you challenge those stories you're telling yourself, you can begin to see they're not the truth.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

What is my current belief about exercise?

If this is a negative thought, what's the exact opposite of that?

What if you were someone who loved to exercise? What would that look and feel like?



Try on a few affirmations:

- I honor my body and my body honors me
- I love to move my body
- Exercise reenergizes my mind, body, and spirit
- I like how it feels to grow stronger every day

Like so many things, start small.

Instead of trying to convince yourself that you would love to run a marathon, find a way to look forward to your daily walk. Make it a pleasure. Listen to music or a podcast or an audiobook. Breathe deeply. Enjoy the scenery.

Once people get in the habit of doing it, plus the habit of enjoying it, many people find that it quickly grows on them. And before they know it, they truly love being a more consciously, active person.



CREATING A PERSONAL EXERCISE PLAN YOU CAN STICK TO

Do you start exercise plans with the best intentions of nourishing your body, but then have trouble staying with any regimen long enough to see the benefits?

Developing a personal exercise plan that you can stick to will help you to lead a longer and healthier life. These are some principles and techniques to help you understand the basics and keep you fit for life.

How To Create a Personal Exercise Plan

Clarify your goals. Moderate low-impact exercise is all you need to improve your overall health and feel more energetic. Just start slowly with your workouts and work your way up to more challenging ones. Some days will be harder than others. Just adjust your workout accordingly. If you miss a day because of a flare, don't beat yourself up about it! Just make sure you get back to the gym, or wherever you're working out, as soon as you can.

What are your exercise goals?



See your doctor if necessary. If you're over 35 and you've been inactive for a while, you may want to check with your doctor before starting an exercise program. Your doctor can also help you plan a program that's safe for various conditions like heart disease or arthritis.

Take a balanced approach. Your body may have a hard time adjusting to the workload you are putting it through. Allow yourself to get adequate rest. Remember, this is a lifelong condition that requires lifelong attention.

What types of exercises would you like to include in your plan?

Schedule it. The number one reason people claim they don't exercise regularly is a lack of time. You make time for a variety of other things every day: eating meals, taking a shower, driving to and from work, television, and more. So make an appointment with yourself to get the exercise your body needs to be as healthy as it can possibly be.

Let's create a simple exercise schedule. When is the best time for you to exercise each day/week?





Enlist support or find a workout buddy. The number two reason people don't exercise is boredom or loneliness. Get out there with a good friend or your significant other. It's a good time to spend with others and can definitely make things a lot more enjoyable. A workout partner will also make you feel a greater sense of responsibility; no one likes to let other people down. Getting fit can be fun if you add in a social component. Help your kids get a healthy start by playing volleyball together in the evening instead of watching TV.

Who could you ask to join you as an exercise buddy?

Vary your workouts. Guard against boredom by mixing up your activities. Visit a new yoga studio or do your tai chi outdoors when the weather is pleasant. Come up with a variety of activities. There's no reason you can't swim one day, walk the next, and bike around the neighborhood the day after that. So think about everything the world has to offer and keep yourself entertained as well.

Generate a list of at least a few different exercise options that you might enjoy.

Make it easy to exercise. Driving halfway across town in rush hour traffic is enough for anyone to find an excuse to skip a day. The truth is that a health club really isn't necessary. A simple set of weights, a jump rope, or some running shoes are probably all you really need. Make it easy and fun enough to exercise that you don't have a good excuse not to head out the door.. Positivity is anti-inflammatory while dread and negativity are pro-inflammatory. Making it fun will be part of the health benefits.

What's the easiest way for you to get started becoming more active?

Anticipate obstacles. Identify potential interruptions and make contingency plans. You could keep a treadmill on hand for those days when bad weather traps you indoors or take a jump rope with you when you travel. Maybe look up seated and standing yoga positions to switch it up on days where you can't find energy to get out of bed.

What obstacles might stand in your way, and how will you handle them?



Track your progress. It's a lot easier to stay interested and motivated when you can see some real progress. Fortunately, progress comes quickly at the beginning of any exercise program. So devise a test of your fitness that you can do occasionally. It can be simple, like how many jumping jacks you can do, or how long it takes you to walk a mile. (See below for advice on creating an exercise journal.)

Reward yourself. Celebrate your progress with rewards. Sample exotic fruits or treat yourself to a new set of walking shoes or book a massage!

How will you celebrate your progress?



THE EXERCISE JOURNAL MIRACLE FOR THOSE WHO KEEP MEANING TO EXERCISE

There's a big difference between buying a gym membership, and using it on a regular basis. Keeping an exercise journal is one tool for making your workouts more consistent and effective. Take a look at the benefits of tracking your exercise.

Benefits of Keeping an Exercise Journal

Increase awareness. Writing in a diary encourages mindfulness. At the same time, you'll also be able to relax and enjoy the rest of your day once you've documented the necessary information.

Clarify goals. You could miss out on the fun of simply moving your body if you're trying to overdo it and transform yourself into a Superhuman. Aiming for reasonable targets like walking a mile more each week will give you more victories to celebrate.

Hold yourself accountable. You're less likely to skip your workout if you know your diary will become lasting evidence of that fact. You'd rather do those quick stretches than keep thinking about them.

Pay attention to your body. If you're feeling so run down you can hardly get out of bed, it's probably not a good day to go exercise. If you're feeling a little run down but can function, dial back the intensity of your exercise and see if you can still perform. Sometimes light exercise helps you recover faster than not exercising at all.

HOW TO KEEP AN EXERCISE JOURNAL

Design your format. If you're a techie, organize your data with a mobile app on your phone. If you prefer pen and paper, buy a journal with a pretty cover.

Define your scope. You may want to track just the basics or paint a more detailed picture. At a minimum, try to capture how long your workout lasted and the level of intensity for you that day.

Examine your feelings. Many people find it helpful to understand how emotions affect their fitness plans. It's motivating to see how a half hour of cycling enhances your mood. On the other hand, if you leave a cycling session feeling drained, it could be a sign of overdoing it.

Add images and quotes. Pictures and inspirational sayings may provide an extra boost. Looking at your children's faces may encourage you to pass on healthy habits. A line from a favorite song could make you feel like dancing.

Schedule updates. Most studies find that exercise journals have more impact if you write in them each day. Recording your performance on the spot also helps to ensure accuracy. Experiment with a system that will work for you. That could mean bringing your notebook to the gym or filling it out before bed.

Vary your routine. Our bodies adapt to any familiar movement so walking a mile will soon require less effort than it used to. If you want to advance, you'll need to make things more challenging. Many experts suggest that a 10% weekly increase in weight, intensity, or distance is usually a safe guide. However, just go at your own pace. Start slowly with your workouts and work your way up to more challenging ones when you feel you're able to.

Review your records. Use your journal to reflect on how far you've come. Maybe you've worked your way up from exercising for 5 minutes a day to 60 minutes over the course of the year.

Consult with others. Reserve your journal for your eyes alone or share it with your health team. Your physician or personal trainer can give you more detailed recommendations when they learn more about you.



THIS WEEK

HOMEWORK

- ✓ Begin finding ways in your day to add natural movement in.
- ✓ Create a positive affirmation about exercise and add this to your journaling ritual.
- ✓ Create your personal exercise plan using the steps above.
- ✓ Choose a method for keeping track of your progress (an exercise journal) and begin using it.
- ✓ Now that we're 8 weeks into this program, let's check back in with the goals you set at the beginning of the program. Are you feeling on track with these? Where do you need more support?

