

FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF LAURIE@LAURIEGARRISON.COM

From the Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/twincities/news/2020/03/30/an-exercise-guide-for-busy-executives-every-little.html>

## An exercise guide for busy executives - every little bit counts

**Sponsored Content**

Mar 30, 2020

Scheduling time for exercise can be a challenge. Among other priorities like family, friends and work, exercise often comes in a distant fourth.

It's no secret that exercising provides a multitude of benefits. According to an article published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, exercise reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.



Finding activities that you enjoy can be key to continuing with an exercise program long term.

Despite these well-known benefits, adherence to regular exercise programs is poor. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reports that fewer than 5% of adults participate in 30 minutes of physical activity daily. Only one adult in three engages in the recommended amount of physical activity each week, and more than 80% of adults don't meet the HHS guidelines for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities.

Danielle Johnson, a wellness physical therapist at the Healthy Living program at the Mayo Clinic, points to four primary reasons why adults don't exercise:

Time constraints.

Priority conflicts.

Our personal stories about exercise.

Not knowing what to do.

“The stories we tell ourselves can impact our ability to enjoy physical activity,” said Johnson. Some people may have had poor experiences with physical activity or are bound by expectations of what activity should look like. Many others may not identify themselves as “exercisers.” Finding activities that you enjoy can be key to continuing with an exercise program long term.

### **A change in perspective**

“We need to reframe the way we look at exercise,” said Johnson. “There are a lot of misperceptions about the intensity and type of movement people think they have to do to achieve health benefits. Going to the gym is great, but at the end of the day, we just want to encourage people to move.”

A simple reframing technique is for people to take up an activity they already know they enjoy. Healthy physical activity doesn’t have to involve going to the gym. This fits under the NEAT theory – non-exercise activity thermogenesis – which is an acronym coined by Dr. James Levine, a professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic. NEAT encompasses all activities outside of a formal exercise program, such as walking, dancing, vacuuming, mowing the lawn, etc., that are beneficial for health, weight management, and mood regulation.

A second reframing strategy is to view exercise as a helpful activity to make other priorities better. For example, grandparents who want to be more active with their grandchildren may find regular daily movements can lead to that goal. “We talk to people about how exercise can be a partner to their priorities, as opposed to something that’s taking time away from them,” said Johnson.

### **Tips for building exercise and activity into a busy life**

Interval training a couple of days a week decreases the amount of time needed to achieve benefits similar to a longer workout. For example, a 21-minute interval workout includes five-minute warm-up and cool down periods, four 30-second high-intensity periods and three three-minute active recovery periods. On a scale of one to 10 with 10 being maximal effort, the high-intensity work phase should be

a seven to nine, or very hard, and the active recovery phase should be a three to four, or moderately hard. “When we spend time at higher intensities, we can reduce the total amount of time that we spend on exercise, without sacrificing all of the great benefits that we receive with exercise,” said Johnson.

A time saver involving resistance training is to work on movements involving major muscle groups, like pushing and pulling, as opposed to focusing on individual muscles.

For people who can't find any time in their already busy day, Mayo's Healthy Living program created a series of five exercises that can be done in the office: squats, desk pushups, chair pushups, toe raises and lunges. “If you do these three or four times a day, you've done a lot of great body weight resistance exercise,” said Johnson. People who aren't comfortable doing these activities in front of their peers can opt for a stairwell, conference room or restroom.

Frequent business travelers have additional complications when it comes to scheduling exercise. Johnson, who routinely works with traveling executives through the Mayo Clinic Executive Health program, suggests planning ahead and staying alert for available options. Some airports now have yoga rooms or partnerships with athletic clubs, while others offer concourse maps with the mileage marked for indoor walking trails. Similarly, many hotels now have onsite exercise facilities, can bring exercise equipment to guests' rooms and offer maps of the surrounding area with walking and running trails marked.

“Travel in clothing that gives you the accessibility to walk the concourse,” said Johnson. “Pack tennis shoes. Prepare for the opportunity and make movement a priority.”

### **Plan ahead and count it all**

To schedule any type of exercise in a busy day, Johnson advocates making a plan. “Look at your week and map out times to get your exercise in and know in advance what you're going to do,” said Johnson.

“We advocate meeting people where they are,” said Johnson. “When people make small, attainable goals in the beginning, they can build on the success of achieving those goals. This is important in continuing a behavior change. Everything counts.”

“I use the analogy of a retirement plan,” Johnson concluded. “People don’t make a huge lump sum contribution every once in awhile. They make small contributions. Over time, it accumulates and grows, and at the end of the day, they have a nice retirement. It’s a similar principle with exercise. We need to start thinking about making this investment in our health by doing little things every single day.”

*Offerings that fit your lifestyle, goals, and schedule. Learn more about the Mayo Clinic Executive Health program.*

*Mayo Clinic is a nonprofit organization committed to clinical practice, education and research, providing expert, comprehensive care to everyone who needs healing.*