

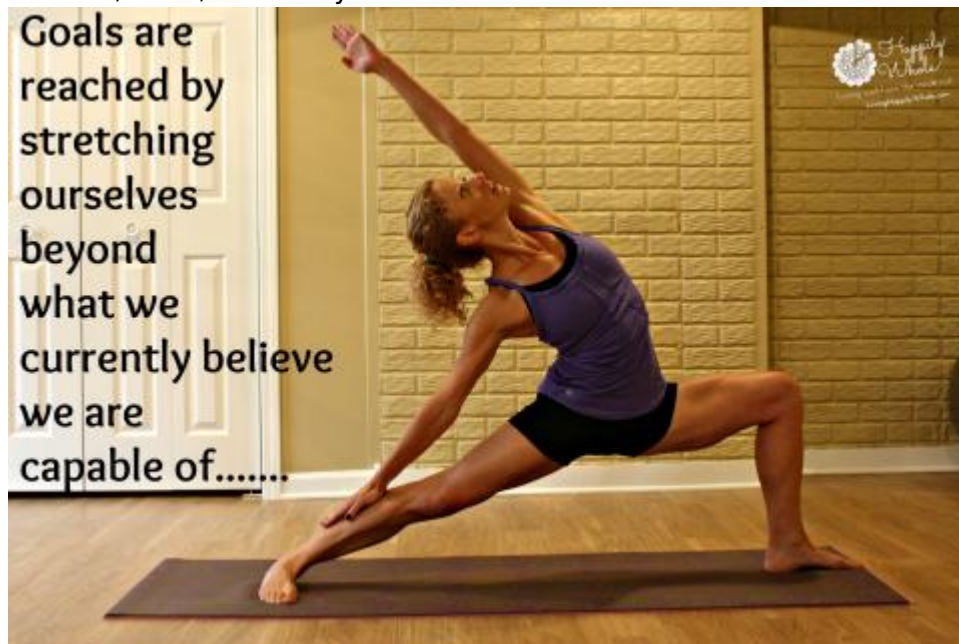


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[Home](#) > 5 Keys to Real Fitness Success

5 Keys to Real Fitness Success

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Like any other area of our lives, ***fitness goals are reached by stretching ourselves beyond what we are currently capable of.*** As children we didn't improve math skills without challenging our minds and progressing to more complicated concepts. Now as adult women, we must get out of our comfort zones to become better wives, moms or servants of the Lord. Well, living fit requires the same kind of 'self-stretching'.

I love that idea of '***self-stretching***', don't you!? It feels inspiring and hopeful. It illustrates our room for improvement and space for self-enhancement. Sure, daunting at times, but mostly it's an opportunity to jump head first into a purposeful process of PROGRESS. And if we're not on a path of hope, inspiration, growth and progress our whole lives, than we're simply sitting stagnant and still. I'd rather forge ahead, wouldn't you? Well, today I'm talking about forging ahead in fitness from the [Happily Whole perspective](#) [1]!

Here are few of my personal favorite and simplest strategies for staying fit. They work for me and I

hope at least one of them works for you too...

1. Mind over matter. Move your mind out of its comfort zone before you ever start moving your body. Every morning when I wake up, even after years of exercising habitually, there's still that small part of me longing to linger in bed a little longer. And, if I've scheduled an afternoon exercise session, there's always something else on my 'to do' list calling my name, taunting me to throw in the towel and try again tomorrow. But because my plan to exercise is as firm as my intention to cook dinner for the kids, I overcome the temptation.

Before you ever put your gym shoes on or roll out your yoga mat, make your mind up: **exercise is the ONLY way you'll ever get fit.** You'll never get stronger, feel more functional, tone your muscles or increase your flexibility without exercise. Here's more on the [Happily Whole MIND](#) [2].

Speaking of your mind, exercise enhances focus and feel-good hormones to help us get through a day with a more positive perspective. **Essentially, moving more makes for a healthy mind!** In fact, my mental health (aka saving my sanity!) is [my most motivating factor](#) [3] to get me moving. So, think earnestly about what fitness means to you because if you attach some real, personal meaning to physical fitness you're FAR more likely to make your intentions a consistent reality.

2. Keep a fresh routine. I know our minds may rebel but our bodies thrive off of CHANGE! Find a variety of kinds of exercise you enjoy to keep your body guessing and responding with results. (Key point: 'you ENJOY'...we often don't keep up self-care habits we loath.) If you constantly take the same classes, exercise at the same intensity or go through the same motions when strength training, try switching it up. Instead of the elliptical, try some swimming. Instead of walking at the same pace all the time, incorporate some faster intervals or hills a few times throughout your cardio sessions. Do different videos, go hiking, try a dance class and integrate exercises that challenge more than one body part at a time into your fitness routine. Here are a couple routines that do just that: [Pure Body Weight](#) [4] and [Ready, Set, GO!](#) [5]

3. Amp up your strength training. Along those same lines, while your fitness level will improve by simply moving more and changing things up from time to time, your body will also respond when you increase the amount of weight you use to challenge yourself. That may mean you use your own body weight to increase the load (like doing standing lunges or single leg squats instead of floor exercises) or using dumbbells or cable machines to add intensity to your strength routine. I'll personally testify to this. After a long time of primarily using lighter weights and body weight for my fitness routine, I decided it was time to hit the heavier weights again. Within two months, I felt significant strength gains and saw my muscles respond (and, no, ladies, we will NOT get bulky by strength training!). Here's more on that: 7 Reason [Why We Need Resistance](#) [6]

4. Fuel your body for fitness. Eating clean and drinking plenty of water lay the foundation for fitness. If you've been exercising with consistency and intensity but not reaping the rewards of your precious time spent, take a deeper look at your diet. Are you consuming protein at each meal and eating plenty of vegetables? Are you avoiding processed foods, refined grains and sugars? Do you drink plenty of water? Here's more information on how to eat clean and exactly how you can clean your eating up for fitness results: [Tips for eating clean](#) [7] and a [grocery list for clean eating](#) [8] and [Kitchen Clean Up](#) [9]

5. Put it in perspective. God created us all with equal value but with different strengths, skills and attributes. That's true for our physical bodies also. Yet perusing the internet and fitness magazines would have us believe fit bodies all look alike. The truth is, even an unfit body is worthy of honor and respect simply because God created it and it was purchased for the devastatingly high price of

Christ's blood. So, when you resolve to move that beautiful body of yours, no matter what it looks and feels like today, do it in deep appreciation for the physical vessel He created for you to navigate this life with.

1 Timothy 4:8 says: "for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

Ladies, physical fitness IS of value. I believe God wants us to take care of our earthly bodies well. *But not to the extent we allow our spiritual workouts to become weak.* So, seek HIM first even in matters of physical health and fitness! Train yourselves in godliness first and foremost while exercising mindfulness and self-control as you nourish your beautiful bodies.

Now--go move that beautiful body of yours!

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Links

- [1] <https://www.livinghappilywhole.com/articles/live-well-inside-out/happily-whole-body>
- [2] <https://www.livinghappilywhole.com/articles/live-well-inside-out/happily-whole-mind>
- [3] <https://www.livinghappilywhole.com/articles/fitness-articles/my-personal-fitness-fix>
- [4] <https://www.livinghappilywhole.com/content/pure-body-weight>
- [5] <https://www.livinghappilywhole.com/content/ready-set-go>
- [6] <https://www.livinghappilywhole.com/articles/fitness-articles/why-we-need-resistance--good-reasons%E2%80%A6ladies-listen>
- [7] <https://www.livinghappilywhole.com/articles/eating-well-articles/clean-eating-tips-30-day-challenge>
- [8] <https://www.livinghappilywhole.com/articles/eating-well-articles/30-day-spring-cleaning-food-lists>
- [9] <https://www.livinghappilywhole.com/content/kitchen-clean>