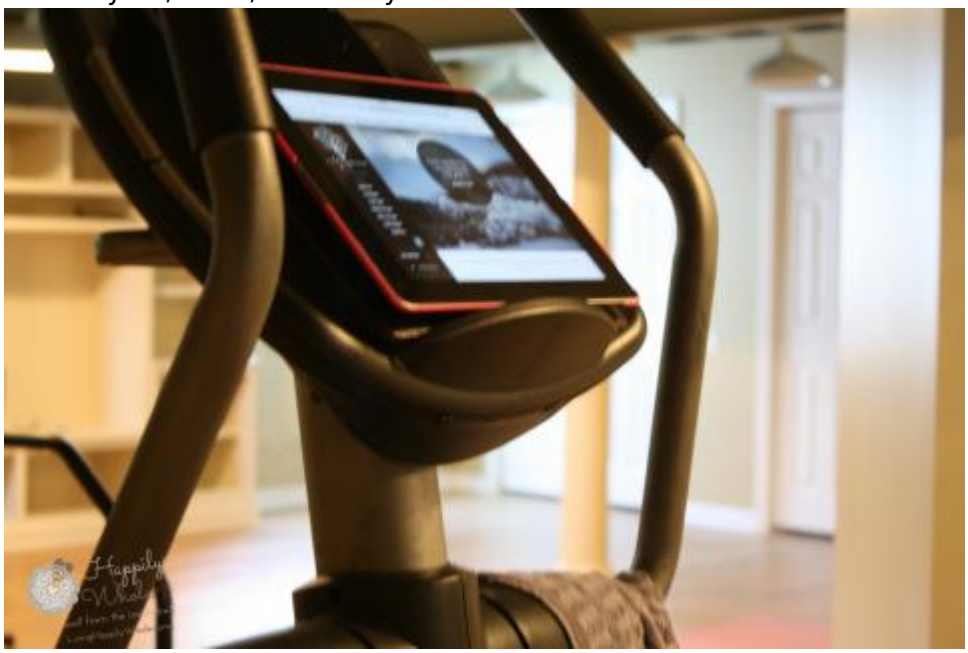
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My Personal Fitness 'Fix'

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What I wish I could tell you, as a lady of the wellness/fitness industry, is that I've always possessed an amazing, unfailing, feel-good relationship with all things exercise. **Ehhh! No. Not exactly**.

In fact, considering all aspects of living-well, fitness comes closest to my personal collapse. Not because I don't stay fit and exercise on a very regular basis (like at least 5 days a week), but if I fail to keep my perspective fixed properly, fitness creates chaos in my character! You see, I am a strange mix of a Type A, borderline-obsession-prone personality and a more artistic minded soul in need of constant creative outlets. I blame it on God…and my parents.

What does that have to do with fitness? Well, I've struggled to find a way to make exercise fit both my creative side to do what **feels inspiring** and to still suit my Type A, purposeful side always wanting to reach that goal. *It's that battle between basking in the process and aways pressing towards an*

'end-result'.

To complicate the matter, in the past, exercise has been my sort of.....**dysfunctional obsession**. There. I said it! I have a tendency to want to 'exercise it away'—figuratively and literally. If stress is soaring, I move more. Solved. To make matters more complicated, many moons ago I allowed myself to self-soothe with food. I exercised that extra 'baggage' away, too, if you know what I mean! Food soothed the stress then I exercised away the extra calories.

Let's be honest, it was a dysfunctional, punishing and deeply dissatisfying way of living. It was a vicious, self-defeating cycle NOT indicative of a healthy mindset. And, friends, it is a COMMON phenomenon on the fitness industry.

I tied exercise tightly to aesthetics. Without even realizing it, exercise became uninspiring and all-together uncreative. Sad, really, since I wasn't personally practicing what I professionally preached. Oh, I had a passion for fitness but it wasn't one I'm now proud of. Thankfully, my personality as an instructor and trainer remained positive and encouraging, always teaching the perspective I longed to possess.

I continued to solve problems by masking them with movement rather than seeking a resolution for the root issue. In fact, when Kevin (my then husband) [1] was sick, I leaned heavily on exercise as a release for extreme high anxiety. Every morning like clockwork I worked out, and in some ways I worked it all out, making sense of it all—even when I had to rise before five and when my weight dipped too low. It helped me stay sane and focused. It worked well for me...temporarily. **That's just it...only temporarily fitness can serve to seemingly save. It's no substitution to a real Savior. [2](gasp...convicting, don't you think?)**

So, there I was. Workouts were working for me...until I realized I'm made for more than this fast-moving, over-structured mess! Tired, seeking solace and simply over-run by stress of new widowhood and single parenthood, **I stopped**. Not the exercising but the aching for it to solve more than what it's meant for. **I consciously decided to side with my creative side**.

I am overjoyed to say that it didn't take much! Once I felt the relief of a real routine, a more authentic one, my exercise inspiration set in. I'm not tied to it to cover up character flaws, solve emotional stress or to achieve a certain aesthetic. Sure, working out helps with all those things. But, now I do it for ME, out of love for the blessing I have in this body and simply *to feel a little free once and in while*.

I have hit my literal and proverbial stride. Not that I don't struggle with old tendencies from time to time (I am human, you know). **But, I can finally say that fitness FITS me just right. Here's how I do it. [3]**

Over time I've learned to love my body and the movement it makes. While I lean on my early morning workouts as an outlet for anxiety and, well, even maintaining the sanity of this single mom, it's a **satiating stress relief---not a frantically striving one**. The sessions are settling and strengthening rather than attempts at aesthetics or a method of dealing with unsolved issues.

Fitness feels inspiring and actually stimulates my creativity instead of stifling it! I often find myself pausing to jot down ideas for an article or project. The physical movement calms and creates focus in my mind. I crave it early in the morning like a cup of coffee (which is actually an afternoon indulgence for me).

But, there's more. **It's a 'fix'...a faithful fitness fix I give myself...a faith-filled fix that focuses me on God**. Maybe is sounds strange to you but something about moving in the morning wakes my

senses to His new mercies. Before I begin, I read a verse or two or perhaps a devotional passage that puts my mind right.

If the day's workout consists of my elliptical machine, my iPad with inspirational readings opened up rests on the display screen. Often I get through a paragraph or two before I work into a prayer for a purposeful day. If I'm on my yoga mat, mindfulness and a simple verse to meditate on makes me feel refreshed and ready to make the most of a Christ-centered motherhood. It's a little different every day, but I like to meet a challenge so it's always invigorating. Running outside, cardio [4]workouts, power yoga [5]on the mat or strength [6]sessions. Some more spiritual than others but all begin that way.

I believe fitness is a tool I use in my life. It's a tool you can use, too. Something you do to take care of your temple and rejuvenate your mind. The WHAT you do matters much less than the HOW and WHY. That's how I feel, anyways.

Maybe you can relate to some of my sentiments. Maybe you're struggling or striving right now or perhaps you already feel at peace. Where ever you are, I truly hope you find a way for fitness to feel inspiring, healing and more than mundane movement.

Here's to giving up the Grind for a Real Fitness Fix!

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