

Healthy Life, Happy Life

How to Embark on Your Personal Fitness Journey

A WORKBOOK

By: Jordana Kagan NSCA-CPT



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Introduction

Every year, millions of people resolve to “get in shape”. For a variety of reasons, most of them will not reach their fitness goals. Rather than feeling defeated and guilty, we can learn from these experiences. By preparing for the process, we will be able to realize success.

This workbook is designed to help you navigate your fitness journey. Whether you’re new to exercise or returning after a hiatus, this workbook can help you stay motivated and take action. Completing the writing prompts will lead you to identify your reasons for wanting to change and assist you in anticipating the challenges that could derail your intentions. The activities in chapters 3 and 4 will guide you through the planning process so that you’ll be able to tackle your fitness resolutions and progress towards your personal goal (more on that later). Revisit these pages and revise your goals as you grow healthier, stronger, and more confident.

Your body is eager to move, your muscles are ready to flex. It’s time to embark on your fitness journey.

What Exercise Should Be

For the recreational exerciser, there are three components that make achieving fitness a successful (read: *sustainable*) endeavor. These elements are:

Three E's of Exercise

1. Enjoyable
2. Effective
3. Efficient

If your goal is to incorporate healthy movement into your daily routine while still managing to navigate your other responsibilities, then these three principles are essential. They will ensure that you maintain a balanced life and a healthy sense of self esteem - because let's face it, priorities are dynamic and you shouldn't feel guilty for missing a workout if life happens. Fortunately, appropriate planning can help steady you when you do encounter those occasional curve balls.

Meeting a work deadline by the end of the week might take priority over going to the gym. A sick child might need your attention more urgently than a run on the beach. However, if we remember that exercise is supposed to be enjoyable, we'll be inclined to make time for it no matter what, even if only for 20 minutes. Fitness *is* fun, and it can relieve stress and improve focus. Imagine how much easier it will be to tackle day-to-day tasks if you feel refreshed and energized. Exercise can do that.

“All glory comes from daring to begin.”

Eugene F. Ware

With direct benefits like this, you'll want to stick with it, especially when you start seeing the physical changes. Maybe you want to lose fat or get stronger. Maybe you're hoping to improve your health profile and overcome a medical condition. Maybe you just want to make the daily grind a little more manageable. The right exercise program should help you achieve your goal. It needs to work effectively for you.

But what's the use of having an awesome exercise program if you can't fit it into your schedule? Whatever routine you commit to, it must be efficient. If you can't reasonably complete your workouts, then there's no point in setting yourself up for failure.



Understanding Yourself

So, how can you navigate your own program? First you need to understand yourself. Consider the following, and be honest...

<input type="checkbox"/> Do you want to work out for yourself (intrinsically motivated)?	OR	<input type="checkbox"/> Do you need to have an external goal (extrinsically motivated)?
<input type="checkbox"/> Will you be more motivated to exercise in a special location (gym/park/beach)?	OR	<input type="checkbox"/> Will it be easier to exercise in the privacy and comfort of your own home?
<input type="checkbox"/> Do you want the fitness experience to be independently focused?	OR	<input type="checkbox"/> Do you want a group dynamic and training partner?
<input type="checkbox"/> Will you listen to particular music, podcasts, audiobooks etc. as you work out?	OR	<input type="checkbox"/> Do you prefer silence and sounds of nature?
<input type="checkbox"/> Will you follow a program by yourself?	OR	<input type="checkbox"/> Do you prefer to have someone talk you through each set?

What kinds of activities do you enjoy?

How much time are you willing to spend each day/week in pursuit of fitness?

What things have prevented you from being consistent with your fitness in the past?

What do you anticipate as potential challenges to your fitness goals now?

As you can see, there's a lot to consider, but reflecting on all this will help you set realistic goals that you can commit to, and subsequently achieve. *That* is success.

*“Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful,
we must carry it with us or we find it not.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Setting Goals

There are three types of goals. First up, **Behavior Goals**. Identify one action that you will complete. Be specific. Set a time. Choose your place. Identify the purpose. For example, *On Wednesday, after dinner, I will take a relaxing 20 minute walk on the beach.* The more specific you are, the better. You can check the weather to make sure Wednesday is a good day to walk on the beach. You can plan your dinner menu so it doesn't sit too heavily in your stomach. You can even invite a friend to join you. What is your Behavior Goal for the week? Importantly, you can use the same behavior goal each week for an entire month in order to groove new patterns of behavior and engrain new habits.

Action

Time

Place

Purpose

Prepare

Next, **Performance Goals**. Identify one feat you would like to accomplish. Again, be as specific as possible. *I want to complete five push ups in a row by Christmas.* Or, *By New Year's, I want to walk up the stairs without needing to hold onto the banister.* These goals are achievable with the right programming.

What is your Performance Goal?

What is your time frame?

Lastly, **Personal Goals**. Identify one reason pushing you to pursue fitness. Finding your driving motivation will help you stay focused and flexible. There are many ways to achieve a goal. Allow yourself the freedom to experiment with finding your path and give yourself credit for every step you take in that direction.

How can you do this? The Rule of Three. Ask *Why?* three times. *I want to get in shape... because I feel self-conscious in a bathing suit...I want to get in shape...because I don't feel comfortable doing things that I want to do...I want to get in shape...because I want to feel confident and enjoy my life by doing all the activities that I love.* Dig deep. Find your reason.

What is your reason?

Why?

Why?

Why?

“We will either find a way or make one.”

Hannibal

Program Design

Once you know what you want to accomplish and why it matters, you can begin to form your plan. Some basic guidelines:

- Do a little bit of everything
- If something is challenging, then it's something you need to intentionally work on



What does this mean? Cardio, strength, balance, agility, and flexibility all have their place in an exercise program.

How do you apply it? Think in three, of course. For instance:

- Warm Up. Workout. Cool Down.
- **Monday** - Run, **Wednesday** - Yoga, **Friday** - Weightlifting
- 10 minutes cardio. 10 minutes agility. 10 minutes flexibility.

Mix and match to find what works for you. Remember that your program will change as you develop your skills and as life happens. You might want to train for a powerlifting competition in February, run a 5k in April, and spend all day on the beach in July. Be aware of your shifting priorities and adjust your routine accordingly.

Remember that designing an exercise program takes a little bit of planning, but doesn't need to be overly complicated. Cardio activities will get your heart pumping and resistance training will focus more on muscle strength and development. These movements can be divided into the following categories:

- **Push** (Overhead Press, Push Up, Triceps Dips, Bench Press...)
- **Pull** (Row, Pull Up, Biceps Curl...)
- **Squat** (Squat, Lunge, Split Squat...)
- **Hinge** (Deadlift, Hip Thrust...)
- **Core** (Plank, Abdominal Hollows, Kneeling Rotations, Single side loaded exercises...)

If you're not a bodybuilder or a competitive athlete, then one exercise for each category will suffice. You can rotate through the movements between workouts or stick with the same ones for a month at a time. You'll progressively increase the intensity as the exercises get easier, either by adding weight (heavier weights = harder to move), adding sets (requiring you to work longer), working one side at a time (increasing demands on stability), or completing the workout in less time (walking 1 mile vs running 1 mile).

*“Freedom is what you do with what’s
been done to you.”*

Jean-Paul Sartre

Sample Workouts

Assuming you don't have any physical limitations due to medical conditions, previous injuries/surgeries/traumas, you can try the sample exercise programs below. ***Of course, it's always recommended to consult with your physician before beginning this or any other exercise program.***

Sample 1:

Warm up -

1. [Marching](#) (20 steps)
2. [Lateral reach](#) (10/side)
3. [Squat with rotational reach to standing](#) (5 repetitions)
4. [Bear bracing with breath](#) (3 repetitions of 5 breaths)
5. [Split squat](#) (8/side)

Strength - (Use a *challenging* weight that will allow you to just barely complete 8-12 repetitions of each exercise. Then move onto the next. You can repeat the circuit for 2-5 rounds.)

1. [Side Plank](#) (10-30 seconds)
2. [Glute Bridge](#)
3. [Rear foot elevated Split Squat \("Bulgarian S/S"\)](#)
4. [Inverted Row](#) or [Bent Over Row](#)
5. [Push Up](#)
6. [Star Jump](#)

Cool Down -

1. [Roll Down](#) (x3)
2. [Child's Pose](#) (5-8 breaths)
3. [Sage Pose](#) (5-8 breaths/side)
4. [Yoga Push Up](#) (5-8 repetitions)
5. [Half-kneeling Stretch](#) - with rotational reach (5-8 breaths/side)

Sample 2:

Warm Up -

1. [Full Body Extension](#) (10)
2. [Knee Ups](#) (30 steps)
3. [Butt Kicks](#) (30 steps)
4. [Walking Lunges](#) (10/side)
5. [Skipping](#) - with arm circles (30 steps)
6. [Spine rotation](#) (8/side)

Workout -

1 minute Walk (brisk pace)

1 minute Run

Repeat x 5 -15

Cool Down -

1. [Lateral Lunges](#) (10/side)
2. [Shin Box Rotations](#) (5/side)
3. [Reaching Pull Through](#) (5/side)
4. [Hamstring Stretch](#) (5 breaths/side)
5. [Calf Stretch](#) (5 breaths/side)
6. [Roll Down](#) (x3)

Sample 3:

Warm Up -

1. [Bird Dog](#) (8/side)
2. [Reaching Dead Bug](#) (8/side)
3. [Bear Squat](#) (x8)
4. [Spider Squat](#) (x8)
5. [Reaching Hip Hinge](#) (x8)

Strength - (Use a *challenging* weight that will allow you to just barely complete 8-12 repetitions of each exercise. Then move onto the next. You can repeat the circuit for 2-5 rounds.)

1. [Plank](#) (10-30 seconds)
2. [Deadlift](#)
3. [Goblet Squat](#)
4. [Squat Jump](#)
5. [Bench Press](#)
6. [Banded Pull Aparts](#)

Cool Down -

1. [Body Circles](#) (8/side)
2. [Roll Down](#)
3. [Goalie Stretch](#) (8/side)
4. [Half-kneeling Stretch](#) - with rotational reach (5-8 breaths/side)
5. [Sage Pose](#) (5-8 breaths/side)

*Your **Strength** Workout*

Warm Up Exercises	Did you experience any pain OR does your body feel ready to work?
Strength Exercises	Number of Sets + Repetitions Completed
Cool Down Exercises	How do you feel (physically, emotionally, mentally)?

Your Cardio Workout

Warm Up Exercises	Did you experience any pain OR does your body feel ready to work?
Cardio Exercises	Duration + Number of Intervals Completed
Cool Down Exercises	How do you feel (physically, emotionally, mentally)?

Reflection

Now that you've completed the workbook, what is the next step for your fitness journey?

How much effort did you exert during your sample workouts? What will you do to vary the intensity so you feel the effects and see results? (**You shouldn't work at level 10 every day. This could lead to injury and burnout. Find a sustainable rhythm and vary the intensity so you hit between 5-9 on your Level of Perceived Exertion several times a week.**)

How long did it take to complete the workout routines? Which ones will you use on “busy” days? “Lazy” days?

How will you reasonably incorporate this (or something similar) into your day/week?

What supports do you need to ensure you stick with it?

“Those who live, are those who fight.”

Victor Hugo

About the Author

Jordana has been working as a teacher and personal trainer since 2000. Her love of movement began at a young age with ballet and developed with cross country running in high school and college. After a severe back injury hobbled her in 2006, Jordana began weightlifting for rehabilitation. Over the years, her passion for fitness has led to additional certifications in Olympic Weightlifting and Kettlebells. Her mission: *To make good people great.*

Reach out.

IG: @brainy.barbelle

www.beatsbooksbarbells.com

