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- [Spurs](#)
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# Health

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## Focus, creativity, efficiency can be enhanced by exercise, experts insist

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**San Antonio Express-News**

Most San Antonians are busy people who juggle their schedules with the panache of a plate spinner. They take the kids to school, go to work, serve on church and PTA committees, cook dinner, do the laundry, mow the lawn, surf the Internet and *still* find time to watch the Spurs on TV.

So why can't they find the time to exercise? Why is a daily workout so often relegated to the bottom of the never-to-be-completed to-do list?

"People always complain there's not enough time to exercise, when they really can't afford not to," says Jan Yager, author of "Creative Time Management for the New Millennium" (Hannacroix Creek Books, \$19.95). "The benefits of exercise make it essential to find the time."

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Indeed, those who blame over-scheduled work and family obligations would be shocked by time management experts who insist that carving out a slice of the day for exercise will, almost magically, expand the amount of time they have for other things.

"I tell people that instead of trying to 'work through' a frustrating period, when they're not being very productive and things aren't going right, to get up and go for a 20-minute walk," says Barbara Hemphill, author of "Love It or Lose It: Living Clutter-Free Forever" (BCI Press, \$19.95). "Physical activity clears the head and lets them think smarter and from a different perspective. So they'll be able to get more done in less time."

Hemphill says she has never consulted with a successful person who didn't take time to exercise. In fact, a study in Clinical Psychology Review found that exercise not only has a positive effect on anxiety and depression, it also helps relieve stress. Ball State University researchers recently reported that business owners who exercised daily were 14 percent more likely to have reached their income goals, 10 percent more likely to feel personal satisfaction at work.

Just do it

The first step to making time to exercise is to decide to do it. Too often, says Yager, people wait for a dramatic wake-up call, such as a friend's heart attack, or their own, before making the commitment.

Two years ago, Jay Friedman's health was out of control. A partner at the law firm of Fulbright & Jaworski, he had high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and was 20 pounds overweight. So despite a high-pressure job, a wife and three children and positions on several nonprofit boards, he decided it was time to get serious about taking care of his health.

"I exchanged the golf clubs for a bike and I now work out only on days that end in Y," he says.

A regular at the Downtown YMCA, he completed five triathlons last year.

One way experts suggest finding time to start exercising is to go on what might be called a "time-wasting diet," cutting out unnecessary things you do in place of working out.

Start by keep a time log of all your activities over several days. You'll be surprised to see how many hours you waste doing unproductive things like watching TV or surfing the Net. For example, Americans spend an average of six hours a day in front of the tube. Quit watching "The Apprentice" and — bingo! — you've freed up an hour to exercise.

Even if you can't live without your weekly Donald Trump fix, you don't have to, says Tracy Lyn Moland.

"Gyms have TVs, so you can watch while you work out," says the life management expert and author of "Mom Management: Managing Mom Before Everybody Else" (The Gift of Time, \$14.99).

If you can't afford to join a health club, buy an exercise ball and a few hand weights instead.

"You can get a full-body workout right in your own home, in front of the TV," says Moland.

Even good works should be re-examined with a skeptical eye. You don't have to say yes when asked to join your neighborhood association's cleanup committee or serve as chairman of the school carnival, especially if the time commitment will mean less time to work out.

"Sometimes the priority has to be you," she says. "You have to take care of yourself."

Moland has a friend who competes in triathlons and used to suffer through long training sessions. Then Moland did one, and her attitude was a revelation for him. "I didn't do it to win, but to finish," she says. "I enjoyed the experience. My friend still competes, but he takes a much more relaxed attitude these days."

Even if you'll never be a triathlete, a change in perspective can help make exercise more enjoyable. For example, instead of telling yourself, "I have to work out at least four times a week," try saying, "I'm looking forward to wearing a size 12, or 10, or 4."

Most experts recommend finding an exercise time that works best for you and keeping it sacrosanct. Write it in your calendar, graffiti it into your Palm Pilot, type it into your Outlook scheduler — do whatever it takes so when someone calls and suggests a meeting for the same time as your yoga class you'll be less likely to blow off the workout.

### Time management resources

- 'Checklists for Life: 104 Lists to Help You Get Organized, Save Time, and Unclutter Your Life,' by Kirsten Lagatree (Random House Reference, \$12.95)
- 'Creative Time Management for the New Millennium,' by Jan Yager (Hannacroix Creek Books, \$19.95)
- 'Love It or Lose It: Living Clutter-Free Forever,' by Barbara Hemphill (BCI Press, \$19.95)
- 'The Procrastinator's Handbook: Mastering the Art of Doing It Now,' by Rita Emmett (Walker & Co, \$10.95)
- 'Mom Management: Managing Mom Before Everybody Else,' by Tracy Lyn Moland (The Gift of Time, \$14.99)

Roberta Roesch has a Word file on her computer that she opens each day to note whether or not she's worked out.

"It's silly, but it's satisfying, writing that, yes, I exercised today," says Roesch, author of "Time Management for Busy People" (McGraw-Hill/Contemporary Books, \$16.95).

Select a routine carefully

Once you've made the commitment to exercise and have worked it into your schedule, there are several ways to avoid sabotaging your good work. First, carefully select the type of exercise you're going to do. Some runners gag at the thought of being trapped on a treadmill. Others love running in the comfort of their home, TV remote at hand, with no concerns about inclement weather.

Still others play racquetball, tennis or basketball, or compete in marathons,

- 'Organizing From the Inside Out for Teenagers: The Foolproof System for Organizing Your Room, Your Time, and Your Life,' by Julie Morgenstern and Jessi Morgenstern-Colón (Owl Books, \$15)
- 'The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal,' by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz (Free Press, \$26)
- 'Time Management for Busy People,' by Roberta Roesch (McGraw-Hill/Contemporary Books, \$16.95)
- 'Time Management for the Creative Person: Right-Brain Strategies for Stopping Procrastination, Getting Control of the Clock and Calendar, and Freeing Up Your Time and Your Life,' by Lee Silber (Three Rivers Press, \$14)
- 'The Time Trap: The Classic Book on Time Management,' by Alec MacKenzie (AMACOM, \$18.95)

triathlons and iron man races. They enjoy the competitive rush that comes with testing themselves against others. And don't worry, if you decide to do spinning classes and get bored, you can always switch to something else — say, step aerobics in front of the TV.

The "two birds, one stone" strategy also can be helpful for those overachievers who often consider exercise time to be wasted time. They may be running or lifting weights, but all they can think about are the hours unbilled, the projects unfinished.

"Select an exercise you can do while you do something else," Roesch suggests. "Walking is great for that."

For example, a concert singer she knows carries index cards printed with song lyrics she memorizes while taking her daily constitutional. Another woman, a motivational speaker, uses her exercise time to practice her speeches.

Less-strenuous exercises also can double as social time for those so busy with work and kids they crave adult conversation. Roesch tells of a couple, both of whom have demanding jobs, who run a busy household with five older children. "The only private time they had together is after 11 at night after the kids are in bed," she says. "That's when they go out for a walk together to talk and exercise."

Like this couple, having someone to work out with also serves to keep your commitment to exercise. Barbara Hemphill works out with a personal trainer at least once a week, not only to push her to do better, but also to keep her honest. Knowing he's waiting makes her more likely to show up, Hemphill explains.

But it's not necessary to shell out \$30 to \$50 an hour or more to be held accountable by a personal trainer. Find a friend to exercise with, someone who'll push you when you feel like slacking off and someone you can push when she wants to take a day off.

Finally, don't become discouraged if you find it hard initially to keep up with your good intentions.

Studies have found that it takes from 21 to 30 days for any new habit to become truly ingrained. So don't sweat it if you suddenly realize in mid-afternoon that you completely forgot to go on your early morning run. Do it tomorrow and the next day and the next. Before you know it, a day without exercise will feel as unnatural as a day without brushing your teeth.

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