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2022

A guide
to a happier,
healthier you

A DAILY JOURNAL
PUBLICATION

INSIDE: Stay committed to fitness with group exercise

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DAILY JOURNAL

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FITNESS



Kelly Hewitt gives a client a high five after class.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Group fitness can help keep you on track

STORY BY JENN WILLHITE //
PHOTOS BY MARK FREELAND

Getting in healthy physical shape requires a level of commitment and dedication that can be easily fostered with group fitness, experts say. The key is to establish balance and routine.

"One thing I love about group exercise is you kind of have an accountability partner, even though you may not know the person next to you," says Kelly Hewitt, head coach with OrangeTheory Fitness located in Greenwood. "It is kind of a team, community atmosphere."

Hewitt says she always tells newcomers that even though they may not know the person on the mat beside them, they will get to know them. The camaraderie built in class carries over as participants help, encourage and inspire one another further building that sense of community, she says.

Of course, we all know that the most difficult part of starting any fitness routine is working up the gumption to show up and be present and that is OK, Hewitt says.



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Left: Kelly Hewitt works with a client. **Right:** Clients exercise together.





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“The hardest thing to do is walk through the front doors, but when you do you will find what works best for you and have goals. Having an accountability partner or a friend to say, ‘Let’s do this together’ and ‘You aren’t alone,’ makes all the difference.”

KELLY HEWITT

“The hardest thing to do is walk through the front doors, but when you do you will find what works best for you and have goals,” Hewitt says. “Having an accountability partner or a friend to say, ‘Let’s do this together’ and ‘You aren’t alone,’ makes all the difference.”

Establishing a routine also works wonders for not only keeping you on track, but motivated, too, Hewitt adds.

One thing to keep in mind is we are built for routine. The human body was not made to be sedentary. So, it stands to reason, once a routine is established and you have a sense of accountability to yourself everything will fall into place and you will be fit in no time, right? Well, not so fast.

“The more you work out, the more you are going to grow,” Hewitt says.

Hewitt regularly advises her newcomers to set three goals. The first goal should be something you can attain with relatively little difficulty, the second goal should be one that is a bit harder to attain and the third one should be something that will take a while to reach, but is something you can chip away at and work towards, Hewitt advises.

If you are attending a group fitness

class for the first time, cut yourself some slack.

“Know your first time isn’t going to be easy and that it is OK to give yourself grace and realize you can’t compare yourself to others in group fitness,” Hewitt says. “It is about you. You start from where you are and grow from there.”

Courtney Johnson, recreation coordinator with Franklin Parks and Recreation, says establishing a routine and getting past our innate desire for immediate gratification are keys to a successful outcome.

“It is definitely a process,” she says. “It does start in the workout room, but it also has to do with what you are putting into your body just as much as how you are working out.”

Finding the right workout for you can take some time, especially if you are new to group fitness.

Regardless of what activity you choose starting out, realize you will be sore. It comes with the territory.

“You are always going to be sore after trying something new,” Johnson says. “But whatever class you feel best in that makes you feel like you got the best workout in, I would go with that one.”

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Left: Tifani Wathen leads clients on a bike. **Right:** Wathen leads a client through an exercise.



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Depending on your fitness level or interest, area gyms and parks departments offer a variety of group fitness classes to suit just about every taste and fitness goal.

In Johnson County, Johnson says Parks and Recreation offer everything from Zumba and water aerobics to Tai Chi and Taekwondo. If those seem a bit too exotic for your taste, the department also offers a range of programs that focus on cardio and weight training, as well.

Depending on your fitness goals, it is important to not only find the right group workout to reach those goals, but to also keep a realistic view of your routine and progress and to not push your body too hard.

“Know you have your specific days you are going to work out and specific days you are going to rest,” Hewitt advises. “Because as much as you want to work out, you have to let your body rest.”

Now, if you have an existing solo fitness routine, such as walking, cycling or weight training, take those workouts into consideration when planning your group fitness approach, Hewitt says.

“It is about balance,” she says. “You never want to over train. If you are coming in for group fitness two times a week, maybe balancing cardio if you do cycling or running. Or maybe take it easier on the cardio portion and hit harder with the weights.”

Regardless of what fitness routine you adopt, it is essential to keep your enthusiasm in check to

avoid inadvertent injury or burnout, Hewitt cautions. If you are a real go-getter with a tendency to push the limits, you might want to consider having a chat with your group fitness instructor or trainer to better gauge how to make the most of your workout.

“I definitely think that is a conversation to have,” Hewitt says. “When it comes to burnout, when you come into a class assess how you feel the next day. You are going to be sore. If you are to the point where it is hard to get out of bed because you are exhausted, you need a rest day. If you can’t give the same performance the next day as you did the day before, you have to take a break. You are coming into group fitness and you want to give your best, but if you haven’t rested you can’t perform at top level, which means you aren’t getting the gains you need.”

If at all possible, let go of any preconceived notions you may have about group fitness until you give it a try, Johnson says. Not everyone may share the same physical acuity, but everyone does take that first step and has been where you are. It is OK to look to others for inspiration and encouragement, but realize this is your fitness journey, Johnson says.

“I would say everyone started one day,” Johnson says. “If you are going to start today, maybe the person in class next to you started yesterday. You just have to take accountability for yourself and start when you want to.”

HEALTH

BOOKS FOR THE BRAIN

Reading for pleasure brings mental health benefits

STORY BY JENN WILLHITE

Reading a good book may sound like an old school activity, but area librarians say consuming words on a page — whether that page is paper or digital — offers many benefits for overall health.

“It is definitely a stress reliever,” says Emily Ellis, assistant director of the Greenwood Public Library. “You are often not thinking of other things when you are reading, so it improves focus. And there have been studies that have shown it reduces blood pressure to be able to sit quietly for a few minutes and do something that engages you in a different way. It is a lot like going for a walk and allows you to focus on something different.”

Taking just a few minutes to read on a regular basis offers not only a moment's pause from everyday stress, but reading also helps improve memory, cognition and keeps you mentally sharp.

“I think a habit of reading keeps your brain flexible and able to learn in different ways and to observe and absorb things in ways that you may not have been able to had you not read this or that that opened that door for you,” says Chris Hoffman, library director at the Edinburgh Wright-Hageman Public Library. “As far as adults and older individuals, the brain is like a muscle. If you don't use it, you lose it. It is important

to stay active in your mind as much as your body, and reading is a great way to do that.”

Going into the new year, unpacking one's daily schedule to carve out time to read can be a tall order.

Ellis recommends adding reading time to your calendar if you keep a schedule.

“Make sure you actually pencil it in,” she says. “And it doesn't have to be a book — if books are intimidating or may take too long to read — read a magazine article. Just make sure that you are sitting down for about 20 to 30 minutes a day and reading what is interesting to you.”

Hoffman suggests sacrificing some screen time.

“What I've found works for me and my family, and I know this is tough for a lot of people, is take some screen time and just remove that and replace it with a book,” he says. “Even if it is for just 15 minutes a day.”

Although most area libraries have seen an influx of patrons as pandemic restrictions have eased, there seems to have been a slight shift in flow and focus. Many people utilize the library's free online services, wifi and printing, but the adult circulation desk is seeing a return to pre-pandemic traffic levels when it comes to checkouts.

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“We’ve had different people come in since the pandemic,” says Erin Cataldi, teen and adult reference librarian with the Clark-Pleasant Branch of the Johnson County Public Library in Whiteland. “Those who didn’t know we have audio books and then we’ve had some come in who hadn’t been in for a while.”

Compared to checkout options in the past, reading these days takes a few different forms, whether you are very tactile and prefer a paper book in hand, maybe you more readily embrace technology and love your Kindle or maybe you prefer the ease of an audio book. Regardless of the format, all qualify as reading, Cataldi says.

“I count all my audio books toward my regular reading goal,” she says. “You are still engaging that same part of your brain.”

Ellis agrees and says audio books offer an added benefit.

“Listening to an audio book is reading,” Ellis says. “So if you don’t have time to just sit and want to get your body moving, take a walk and listen to an audio book.”

Reading tastes and their accompanying lists certainly vary, but if you are looking for an author to get you back into the habit of reading, Stephen King, James Patterson and Nora Roberts remain reliable go-tos, Ellis says.

“Patterson will always be popular and there is always a hold list for his stuff, same with Nora Roberts,” Cataldi says. “And that isn’t with just one demographic. Stephen King is another one, no matter what it is. He could write a cookbook and people would sign up to get it.”

Many classics, such as “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee, are getting renewed attention, too, Ellis says.

“We have seen an increase of people revisiting those classics wanting to reread and understand points of view given the current climate,” she says. “We have seen a few of those titles going out again.”

Reaching back a bit further into the stacks, Ellis says one timeless author everyone should check out is Agatha Christie. Known for creating memorable characters, including Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, Christie offers good, old-fashioned detective work at its best, Ellis says.

“Her ability at storytelling is a kind of simplified storytelling that leaves you with a lot of twists and turns,” Ellis says.

Having an affinity for the classics is one thing, but rest assured, smartphone apps, such as TikTok, are also exerting their own influence.

Thanks to such platforms, titles including “It Ends with Us” by Colleen Hoover and “Green Lights” by Matthew McConaughey are among current trending titles that are proving difficult to keep on the shelf, Cataldi says.

Cataldi adds the latest installment of the Outlander series “Go Tell the Bees That I Am Gone” by Diana Gabaldon was one of the biggest releases of 2021 and is enjoying its spot near the top of the popular titles going into 2022.

“It doesn’t matter what you read; you are engaging your brain and you are doing something important,” Cataldi says. “Never think it is a waste of time because you are doing something great.”

AUTO REPAIR

MAINTENANCE MATTERS

Regular car care can save money and improve safety

BY GREG SEITER

Annual car repair costs vary based on a number of factors including vehicle make, model and age. However, the price tag associated with regular upkeep can pale in comparison to the expense affiliated with major rebuilds and overhauls due to neglected or completely ignored vehicle maintenance.

Periodic oil changes or an investment in a new engine?

An occasional transmission flush or a major bill for a complete transmission replacement?

According to local industry experts, regular car maintenance practices can help consumers save a lot of money in the long run and simultaneously enjoy improved roadway safety.

"The simplest thing a person can do to take better care of their car is to change the oil consistently based on what's recommended in their owners' manual," said Ben Briggeman, owner and CEO of Beck Automotive in Franklin. "Many new

car engines now have Gasoline Direct Injection. Especially in those vehicles, if you don't change the oil regularly, it can cause massive problems."

Southside resident Will Holloway, an Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified master technician, agrees.

"Oil is a very important issue and there can be a real problem if it gets low enough," he said. "Older cars consume more oil than newer ones but there are many other variables to consider. My basic rule is that I change my own oil every 4,500 miles."

According to Holloway, oil should have a clear, caramel appearance.

"If it's milk chocolate, it's almost time for a change," he said.

Briggeman and Holloway also believe it's important for motorists to understand the different types of oil that is available to them including full synthetic, half synthetic and conventional.



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If an engine maintenance light comes on, it's there for a reason but sometimes people overlook it if they think their engine is running fine. If you hear unusual noises or there's a change in how your car performs, get it checked out."

JEFF THOMPSON

"For all cars, I recommend full synthetic," Holloway said. "Full synthetic is more expensive but it's better in the long run. Half synthetic is okay for work and heavy-duty trucks when you tow things and aren't as concerned about performance and efficiency. Conventional oil isn't purely clean. It's okay for small engines like a lawn mower or weed eater."

Briggeman said tire pressure is another area of concern.

Almost every car now has a tire pressure monitoring system so when that light comes on, it shouldn't be ignored," he said. "You don't have to buy expensive tires but you'll get maximum wear out of whatever you have if you keep them inflated to factory recommended levels and have them rotated regularly."

Jeff Thompson, manager at Meineke Car Care in Franklin, suggests that tire pressure be checked monthly.

"Most tires lose about a pound per month and about a pound for every 10 degrees in temperature change," he said.

Is it better to fill tires with nitrogen or air?

"The science behind nitrogen-filled tires is that nitrogen molecules are larger than tire pores so it's harder for air to escape and for pressure to change with temperature fluctuations," Thompson said. "But on the flip side, if you add air to the tires for whatever reason after they've been filled with nitrogen, you change the mixture and you're back to square one. Plus, it's a little more inconvenient to find a place that does nitrogen refills."

Holloway said it's also important to maintain a vehicle's spare tire.

"Many people ignore their spare tire. That happened to me once. I needed it but the tire was flat because I hadn't looked at it," he said. "Check your spare every time you check your other tires. If your spare is flat, you'll end up needing to have your vehicle towed."

According to Thompson, vehicle battery inspections should be standard practice.

"The lifespan of a regular battery is three to five years," he said. "Drastic changes in weather adds a lot of stress to a battery. If you're noticing longer crank time and it's getting harder to start your car, have a test done to see what condition the battery is in. A lot of auto parts stores will test your battery for you."

In addition, engine belts and hoses should be inspected regularly.

"Belts are really easy to check. If you're starting to see cracks and the back side is getting glossy, that means it's starting to wear out," Holloway said.

"Belts will most likely snap or break on a highway because the engine is cranking faster.

"They'll usually last 30 to 50 thousand miles before they really need to be looked at so I check mine once a month."

Thompson said hoses should feel like they have some resistance.

"Don't touch them when the engine is still hot but if you can almost poke a hole through one, it's definitely

weak," he added.

Brakes, including pads and fluid level, should be another consideration.

"Contrary to popular belief, brake pads only affect stopping distance so much. Tires are the really important part," Holloway said. "Brakes and tires work together. Even if you have new brakes or brake pads, if you don't have good tread life on your tires, you could slide further than you want to."

Those who work in the industry say other things to consider when caring for an automobile are windshield wipers and fuel.

"The typical lifespan for a set of wipers is about six months," Thompson said. "Traditional wipers have certain pressure points but beam blades have rubber compounds and stay pliable in cold weather."

"Blades should be checked every few months. Any sort of streak or noise across the windshield is a good reason to change."

According to Holloway, gas is even a maintenance component that needs to be addressed.

"The majority of sports cars like Mustangs and Corvettes run on a higher-octane fuel but 87 octane is fine for standard vehicles," he said. "For fuel economy, I add a fuel additive about once a month to clean out the injectors."

"Also, during the winter, keep your gas tank at least half full," Holloway added. "If moisture gets inside the tank and freezes, it can break the line."

Holloway, Thompson and Briggeman believe proper maintenance is an extremely important part of vehicle ownership.

"If an engine maintenance light comes on, it's there for a reason but sometimes people overlook it if they think their engine is running fine," Thompson said. "If you hear unusual noises or there's a change in how your car performs, get it checked out."

Briggeman is living proof that standard car care practices can pay big dividends.

"I have a Toyota Tundra that has 350,000 miles on it with the original engine and transmission," he said. "Everything has been done as it was supposed to have been done on that vehicle."

"If you stay on top of the maintenance, a car will last 200,000 miles."

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Commit to a sustainable lifestyle

STORY BY FAMILY FEATURES

Committing to healthier living isn't just about calories and fitness. Choosing a healthier lifestyle also means making smarter choices for the world around you, especially when it comes to eating and other daily routines.

Commit to doing your part for a healthier environment with these tips:

In and around the kitchen

What you eat accounts for a great deal of your environmental impact — in fact, more than one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activity can be attributed to the way people produce, process and package food, according to a United Nations-backed study. Factors like animal agriculture, processing, packaging and transportation all influence a food product's cost to the earth. Being conscious of where and how you shop for food can have a positive effect on the world around you. For example, by shopping local, you can reduce transportation impact. Choosing to buy in-season produce as opposed to fruits and veggies from other regions can also help.

Use reusable shopping bags

Each year, Americans use more than 4.2 million tons of plastic bags, sacks and wraps; about 3 million tons of them end up in landfills, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Reusable shopping bags are a simple and affordable alternative to bags that end up in the trash. When you do rely on bags from the store, opt for paper, which biodegrades more easily, or if you must choose plastic, save them to reuse at home.

Consider your food footprint

One simple step you can take is to check the packaging of foods you buy to understand their carbon footprint. For example, each box of Airly Oat Cloud crackers helps remove greenhouse gases from the air through an innovative farming technique that makes agriculture a solution, not a contributor, to climate change. The carbon footprint

is on the back of every box, so you can see how many grams of carbon dioxide you are helping remove from the air and start rethinking the food supply chain. Sustainable doesn't have to mean bland or expensive, however. Made with real, wholesome and 100% truly delicious ingredients, all four flavor varieties (Cheddar, Sea Salt, Chocolate and Salted Caramel) make for delicious, satisfying, convenient anytime snacks.

Plan to start a garden

Through the plants' photosynthesis process, gardens can help manage carbon dioxide while increasing oxygen. Producing your own food means you're relying less on the supply chain and you have a ready supply of fresh, nourishing food without having to leave your home. Gardens are also natural habitats and food sources to important critters like bees, which play an essential role in pollinating and sustaining the earth's vegetation.

Replace outdated appliances

Older kitchen appliances may still get the job done, but chances are that service is coming at a cost to you and the environment. Newer appliances are designed with energy-saving technology, which cuts back on your energy reliance and saves you money on monthly utility bills. When shopping for new appliances, be sure to look for the Energy Star certification so you can be confident you're buying an environmentally friendly product. Also consider recycling old appliances, when possible, as certain components of them can be reused rather than going to waste.

Practice upcycling

Giving new life to old things is known as upcycling. It's a concept that keeps useful things with plenty of functional life from filling landfills. You can practice upcycling by reimagining everything from furniture to clothing. Before tossing an item, consider how it could be used differently or serve a new purpose.

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Develop a better relationship with personal finances

STORY BY FAMILY FEATURES

Your financial health is just as important as your physical and mental health. Money affects almost every aspect of your life and can be the determining factor in many of your day-to-day decisions.

Being financially healthy isn't just about how much money you have in the bank. It also encompasses your financial capability and how you feel about money or how money makes you feel.

Start by doing a self-check to determine your financial health. Look at where your accounts currently stand, including the statuses and balances. The balances in your accounts can be used to calculate your net worth, which is a numerical indicator of your overall financial health from an accounting standpoint.

Also consider your feelings and relationship with money. Then determine if you are a saver or spender. Understanding how you feel about your finances and why you have these feelings can help you improve your overall financial health along with these tips from the financial experts at Kinly, a financial services company helping Black America build generational wealth.

Set financial goals

To improve your financial health, start by setting short-term, mid-term and long-term financial S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time bound) goals. S.M.A.R.T. goal setting can help you be more specific, provide a way to measure your progress, allow you to create a plan to make things more achievable, ensure your goals are in line with other objectives and provide deadlines, so your financial goals don't get lost in the shuffle of day-to-day life.

Create a money plan

A money plan is a guide that details how you want to use your income monthly. This plan should consider the money you want to save and the money you want to spend. As you add your list of expenses, use this opportunity to review where your money is going and if your spending is in line with the financial goals you've set. This is also an opportunity to look for ways to reduce or eliminate spending so your money can be used for things that are important to you, like saving for a down payment on a car or home, or purchasing an item from your wish list.

Expand your financial knowledge

Explore ways to become more comfortable with money and take control of your financial future. Your relationship with money and how you feel about it make up your money story. Money stories involve emotions, beliefs and experiences with money from childhood to adulthood. Start by spending 10-20 minutes each day exploring topics around money or personal finances to help build your knowledge base. You can do this by listening to podcasts, reading books, browsing reputable personal finance websites or exploring financial education resources provided by your financial institution.

If you need a more personalized approach to developing a better relationship with your finances, explore working with a financial coach. Your financial coach can work with you on a range of fundamental money management skills. For example, a financial coach can help you overcome financial anxiety or come up with a debt repayment strategy. The coach can help guide, teach, empower and challenge you to grow into a savvy money user.