

## five keys to an effective fitness plan

Taking care of our bodies includes “working out”, or following some sort of fitness/wellness program. So, whether you are new to fitness, your doctor has asked you to increase your activity, but has given you little guidance, or you just want to make sure you have a well balanced plan of attack for maintaining (or improving) your fitness level, here is a check list of 5 factors required for an effective fitness program.

Compare your current plan, in the context of a week, to the ideas below, and maybe you will discover why you may not be seeing results. “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” Using these ideas, we hope you can develop a weekly and daily routine of specific exercises to keep your time and effort on track.

### 5 Keys to an Effective Fitness Program

**1. Purpose** - A key to remaining motivated to exercise is understanding exactly why we are doing this stuff in the first place. “Functional fitness” is the idea that both our fitness plan and the specific exercises within the plan serve a purpose, or a function. Consider each exercise you perform, are they specific to improving your posture, helping you get up off a low chair, improve your golf game, allowing you to pick up your children, or managing your weight?

**2. Frequency** - this is the number of days per week you are physically active. Whether walking the dog, (at a

decent pace), or coming to the fitness center, you want to find activity you enjoy, one that keeps your heart rate elevated for 20+ min, and do this activity more than 3 times per week.

**3. Duration** - are you spending enough time exercising? You want to keep your heart rate elevated for 20+ minutes per exercise session. This can include cardiovascular exercise as well as strength training exercises, as long as the rest periods between those strength movements do not allow your heart rate to drop significantly, (to near resting heart rate levels).

**4. Intensity** - discovering and reaching your appropriate “intensity threshold” is often the missing link with many people who are not experiencing desired results. Whether on a treadmill or strength training, we must safely reach a point where you are

**“Discovering, reaching, and working through your “intensity threshold” is often the missing link with many people who are seemingly plateau'd. When it comes to toning and weight management, assuming these 5 keys are in tact, appropriate intensity is arguably the most important factor.**

somewhat out of breath, or experience a burning sensation in your muscles. It is only when we leave our physical “comfort zone”, if only for a few seconds, that are body feels challenged, and must therefore improve physically to handle these challenges.

**5. Balance** - Too many of us are only doing “cardio” workouts, and are placing too little emphasis on strength training. **THE KEY TO WEIGHT MANAGEMENT IS MUSCLE PRESERVATION.** Mother Nature is only trying to take bone density and muscle mass away from us, we must fight this with strength training. Also, muscle is the only tissue in your body efficiently burning calories, the more we stimulate muscle through strength training, the more efficiently we burn calories all day long.

### The Key to “Motivation”

Of course if we are not motivated to exercise in the first place, these 5 keys do us no good. Motivation can be a tricky concept, in that it is too often an external driving force we often feel disconnected from. Instead, our goal is to strive for a *state of wanting to be better ... not perfect, but better.* This is only possible when we have clearly defined our goal, and have clearly visualized our *desired state*, and then have begun living as if we are already in that state. For example, *when developing your plan of action, do not set goals that will help you lose 50 lbs. Instead, begin to live as if you weigh 50 lbs less.*