

Writings by Kathie Hightower

Exercise for Energy — One Short Moment at a Time

by Kathie Hightower

Okay, you know that exercise will give you more energy. Energy does beget energy. But sometimes it's hard to remember that when you are dragging — and for a lot of folks it's just too hard to find the time.

Well, no more excuses. Our time excuse won't cut it anymore. Why? You don't have to do the 30 to 40 minutes of aerobic exercise that we all have in mind as a minimum on our "to do" lists. For health purposes — and for energy — that 30 minutes can be split up into smaller segments spread throughout your day.

So how can you apply this to your packed full busy day? Easy, but you have to make a conscious choice to do so — at least until it becomes automatic.

The other day, I told my 80-year-old mother-in-law Naomi that I'd carry her bags down to the car. "Just take your purse and yourself down those steps and I'll get the rest," I said.

"But that means you'll have to make three trips up and down the stairs," Naomi replied.

"That's okay," I said, "It's great exercise."

Her response? "You always say that."

She's right. I do always say that. I see opportunities for exercise all around me — and I approach life with that attitude. Hey, it allows me to eat chocolate when I want (which is pretty much every day) and still maintain my weight. It allows me to have the energy I want to do all these things I'm excited about doing. Why wouldn't you want to approach your life like that?

We live in a house of all stairs — stairs to get to the front door, stairs to go up to the bedroom, stairs to go down to do laundry. Stairs, stairs, stairs. I've had friends say, "How can you stand it?" Stand it? I love it. No matter what else I do each day — whether or not I get to my frequent walks or trips to the Y or my yoga practice — no matter what, I've gotten a lot of exercise just going through the basics of my daily life.

I choose to take stairs instead of elevators in any building that I can. "It's great exercise."

I choose to park in one spot and run errands to the Post Office and library and grocery store, rather than moving my car those few yards in between. "It's great exercise."

I purposely park far away from the entrance to the store even if there are open spaces closer in. "It's great exercise."

I always suggest "walking meetings" instead of coffee or lunch meetings. "It's great exercise."

And, yes, I'm that woman who walks up the steps at the airport when everyone else is standing on the escalator. People stare at me like I'm crazy or something. But which is crazier — using the steps by choice, or standing on an escalator and then paying to go to a gym and doing the stairstepper?

Adopt the "it's great exercise" attitude rather than the "energy/time/step-saving" attitude and you easily add exercise into your day.

I also choose to look for other ways to turn ordinary activities into exercise. Especially at times when you can't do anything else.

- I do squats while I dry my hair every morning.
- I purposely stretch further to put the cups and plates away rather than moving closer in. I do the same when I'm unloading the clothes dryer.
- When I'm putting on my socks and shoes I test myself to see if I can do it standing balanced on one foot rather than using the help of a chair. (I find I can balance longer and longer each time.)
- When I'm standing in line I try standing up on my toes, or balancing on one foot at a time. (Years ago, I read in a diet book that those people who are natural fidgeters tend to have less trouble with their weight. I wasn't a natural fidgeter, but I decided then and there that fidgeting was a good way to go.)
- When I'm pumping gas, I do stretches against the car rather than just standing there reading the ads running along the gas pump monitor trying to entice me into buying a chilled coffee.

Each one of those activities doesn't amount to much exercise in itself. But add up the many times I do that throughout each day, multiply that by 365 days, and you have a lot of extra exercise each year — before I ever get to the gym.

Consider this:

- Let's say you work an 8 hour day. If you stood up from your computer every hour and did just five minutes of stretches, you'd add 35-40 minutes of stretches to your day.
- Research shows that if you take a ten-minute walk, you increase your energy for a full hour. Better and cheaper and less fattening than a double shot latte.

If you need more ideas to jumpstart your own thinking about ways to add more exercise in, read *The Ultimate Guide of One-Minute Workouts for Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime!* by Bonnie Nygard and Bonnie Hopper, RDR Publishers (email:).

(Note: If energy isn't enough of an incentive for you, focus on the fact that exercise decreases your stress, increases your self-esteem, increases your creative thinking capability, and oh yes helps you maintain your weight. What are you waiting for? Get up from the computer chair and stretch!)

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