Finding Ways to Make Exercising Enjoyable

by AFRA WILLMORE

How to Make Exercise Enjoyable

I have always been somewhat bewildered by people who love exercise. As I stand shivering in the sharp spring wind waiting to hand my children over to their teachers, I marvel at the parents who arrive all dressed ready for some post-school-run high-impact, calorie-burning torture.

What confuses me is not that they are doing exercise in the first place – indeed I envy their commitment and their trim bodies. No, what I really wonder about is that they seem excited at the prospect.

The answer to this mystery is of course that they have figured out how to make exercise enjoyable for themselves. This is an important point to remember if you, like me, find the idea of using exercise to keep good control of your diabetes depressing – the key is to find something you enjoy.

How?

Join a Group

Chatting to some of those lycra-clad fitness fans I found they mostly felt (and looked) like me before reaching their current trim and toned condition. Some of them said they started running because a couple of other moms talked them into it and now they have a whole social life based around a mutual commitment to the sport.

They started slowly, attempting short routes around our village and fun-runs, and now most of them are not only capable runners but keen and good enough to take part in races, ranging from muddy endurance tests to half or even full marathons.

Running not your thing? Another group of friends in my village have formed a dog-walking group – apparently the dog is optional! No need for fluorescent clothing and no risk of black toe nails here. They simply gather at a pre-determined starting point after dropping the children off and go for a nice romp in the woods, chatting as they go.

Because of course exercise is not all about pounding miles on a treadmill or cycling on the spot in a gym. You don't have to spend lots of money or buy special clothing. Even if you have a baby in a buggy, or no friends willing or able to join you, a simple search online or on your local noticeboard will reveal a variety of groups looking for new members.

Buggy walking, rambling, running clubs, cycle teams, swimming clubs and – if you are lucky to live by water – a variety of water sports can all help keep your spirits high and your blood glucose as near normal as possible.

Commit to Something Smaller

Not keen to join a group? Don't think you can commit to a regular organized event? You can still exercise even if

it's just running up and down the stairs in your home or at the office, taking the steps instead of the elevator, or walking briskly instead of ambling around the shops.

Park your car at the furthest point from the shops or get off the bus one or two stops early and walk the rest. Seriously, every little bit helps.

Think Outside the Box

You could take up Geocaching – register online, use an official app or GPS and explore to find hidden treasure. When you've found it, you sign the logbook and put it back for someone else to find. There are geocaching sites all over the world and looking for caches will keep you fit.

Or, save money and burn calories by washing your own car, mowing the lawn and cleaning your windows every week.

Fancy something more traditional keep-fit-ish? Then there are literally thousands of online resources and DVDs offering exercise motivation set to pretty much any type of music. Routines can be as short as ten minutes so it shouldn't be hard to fit them into your daily routine. Samba your sugars down!

Talking about dancing, why not arrange a weekly trip with friends to your local club. Disco, Latin, Ballroom – anything that gets your feet moving and your heart pumping will help.

Why Bother?

The benefits of exercise for diabetics are well documented. Exercise, even a little bit, will lower blood pressure, strengthen your heart, improve circulation and help keep your blood glucose at optimum levels, as well as being good for the blues. That's a welcome side-effect!

Another fact is that the more exercise you do, the more you will be able to do as your stamina increases. Take the plunge now to increase your exercise levels even a little bit and you will not only be able to run for the bus, but you might decided to ditch it all together and walk, run or cycle to wherever you need to be.

Don't use your health issues as an excuse to avoid exercise, but if you are genuinely concerned about how you will cope with exercise (due to high blood pressure etc.) speak to your healthcare provider before starting any new fitness regime.

And don't be tempted to splurge the calories you've burned by allowing yourself extra sweet or carb-heavy treats. Try to stick to your normal diet – or use your new motivation to improve it – and when HBA1c test time comes around you will hopefully have started to enjoy your new form of exercise and see a difference in your blood sugar stats.

I can't see me ever wanting to slide into lycra and run a marathon, but with the new walking regime I have decided to start I am hoping to show off toned legs and a flatter stomach once the summer sun comes out.