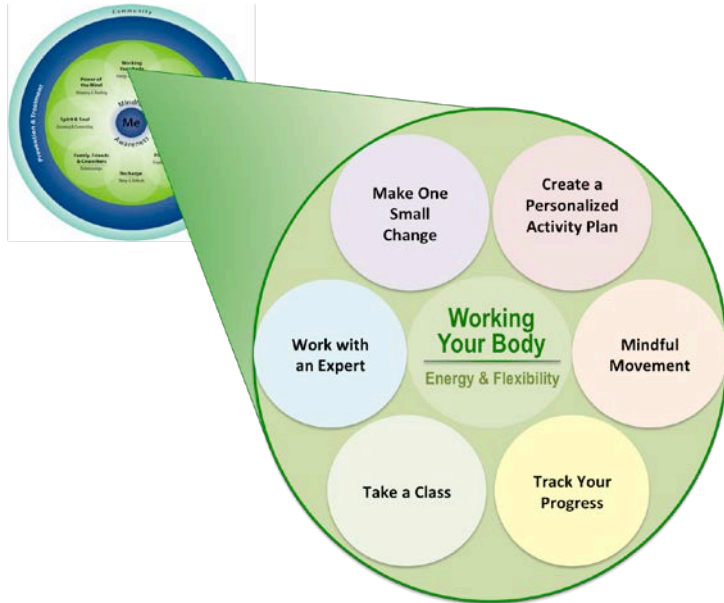


Zeroing In - Working Your Body: Energy & Flexibility

Being active can help prevent all sorts of health problems, boost your mood, extend your life, and help you to do things that matter most to you. Here are some things to explore if you want Working Your Body to be a part of your Personal Health Plan.



Key Points

- Keep safety in mind
- Do activities you enjoy!
- Work your body in all kinds of ways. Do you want more strength? Stamina? Flexibility? Balance? Tailor your actions to your goals
- It might be easier to keep with it if you choose to do activities with other people.
- Ask your clinical team for information and guidance. The VA has many experts who can help.

Create a Personal Activity Plan. It can help to think about four areas (FITT):

- **Frequency:** How often do you want to exercise? A few times a week? Most days?
- **Intensity:** How hard will you work (based on your fitness level so far)?
- **Type:** What activity or activities do you want to do more?
- **Time:** How long will you do this each time?
- Use your answers to these questions to create a Working Your Body plan to follow.

Activity Plan

Mindful Movement. Move your body with attention and intention:

- There are many types of mindful movement, such as yoga, tai chi, martial arts, walking, and even (done with attention) brushing your teeth, to name a few.
- Yoga includes many ways to help your mind and body work together. Most classes involve different poses. It is now covered by the VA.
- Tai chi comes from Chinese medicine and involves gentle movements. It is safe and can be good for balance and other health issues. VA will cover tai chi for some things now too.

Mindful Movement

Track your progress. There are many smartphone apps and other resources that can help you follow your progress. The following are free phone apps (but may offer 'in-app purchases' for people to buy more content):

- SWorkit
- Workout: Gym Tracker
- Strong Workout Tracker
- MyFitnessPal
- Cyclemeter
- Jefit
- Strava
- Daily Yoga

Track Progress

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Take a Class

Take a class. Find out about classes you can take in your area.

- Consider yoga, tai chi, cycling, dance, kickboxing, zumba, or some other group exercise class.
- See if there are telehealth classes (classes where the teacher is online, teaching from a distance) that you can take..

Professionals

Work with an Expert. They can be great for safety and for motivation.

- Occupational Therapists (OTs). Among many things, OTs can help you with daily activities like cooking, cleaning, work activities, and working with your hands.
- Physical Therapists (PTs). PTs provide treatments, exercises and activities to help with physical problems like an injured muscle or joint.
- Recreational Therapists (RTs). RTs coordinate different activities that can both be fun and get you moving.
- Fitness Class Instructors. Instructors teach classes that might include dance, or boxing, or zumba, or martial arts, or many other options. See what is offered in your area.
- Personal Trainers. Trainers can help you set up a workout plan and make sure you do it safely and correctly. Many private gyms have them available.
- Note that for OT and PT, you likely need a referral from your provider.

One Small Change

Make One Small Change. There are all sorts of opportunities. Think about what would work best for you and decide when you will start. Every little bit of activity helps. Here are a few more examples:

- Park farther away and walk.
- Find a walking buddy.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Learn some basic stretches to do each day.
- Take dancing lessons.
- Sign up for a water exercise class, which might be easier on sore joints.
- See if Veterans get a discount at YMCA or YWCA classes.
- Check out some exercise videos from the library (remember not to overdo it!).
- Use your smartphone or smartwatch or some other device to help you track your activity.
- Keep dumbbells by the couch and use them as you watch TV.
- Stand up and move during each commercial break.
- Set a timer so you get up and move at least every 30 minutes.
- Play with the kids in your life.
- Do leg lifts or other exercises while sitting.
- Buy a machine you can pedal while you are seated.
- Take a martial arts class.

Working Your Body Links

You can check out the links below to get more information about Working Your Body:

Whole Health Library Veteran Handouts. These are indexed at

<https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/veteran-handouts/index.asp#working-the-body>.

- An Introduction to Working the Body for Whole Health.
- Get Moving: Adding Physical Activity to Your Routine
- An Introduction to Yoga for Whole Health
- An Introduction to Tai Chi and Qigong for whole Health

Other VA Resources

- Components of Health and Well-Being Video Series, “A Patient Centered Approach To: Working Your Body.”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4zdzDAorbA&feature=youtu.be>
- MOVE! Weight Management Program. <http://www.move.va.gov>. Be sure to look over the list of specific handouts offered at [https://www.move.va.gov/handouts.asp - physical](https://www.move.va.gov/handouts.asp-physical)
- President’s Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition. www.fitness.gov. Check out the Resource Center
- American Council of Sports Medicine. <http://www.acsm.org>. Numerous guidelines, educational opportunities, and resources
- Centers For Disease Control Physical Activities Guidelines.
www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html.
- US Department of Health and Human Services, Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines>
- American Council on Exercise information materials.
<http://www.acefitness.org/acefit/fitness-programs-article/2523/ACEFit-workout-advice-and-exercise-tips/>
- “Breathing, Stretching, Relaxing (BSR)” video from Greater LA.
<http://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/resources/multimedia/index.asp>

Mindful Movement: Yoga

- Find a yoga teacher or therapist. International Association of Yoga Therapists.
<http://www.iayt.org>. Professional organization dedicated to establishing yoga as a recognized and respected therapy
- StarWell Kit. <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/education/STAR/>. Resources from the War-Related Injury and Illness Study Center.
 - Amy Dickinson—Yoga, Breathing, Stretching (Veteran Description)
 - Nina Knight—Yoga, Breathing (Veteran Description)
 - Danny O’Brien—Chair Yoga (Instructional Video)
 - Kim Wade—Mindful Hatha Yoga (Instructional Video)
- Yoga for Vets. <http://www.yogaforvets.org>. Nonprofit focused on bringing yoga to Veterans.
- Arthur’s Amazing Transformation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qX9FSZJu448>. Watch how one Veteran reversed his obesity and pain through yoga.

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- iRest in the Military. Yoga-based practices supporting active-duty military and Veterans. <http://www.irest.us/projects/veterans>

Mindful Movement: Tai Chi

- NCCIH: Tai Chi and Qi Gong: In Depth <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/taichi/introduction.htm>
- StarWell Kit <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/education/STAR/>.
 - Introduction, Part 4: Veterans Explain how Qigong Helps Energy Flow Throughout the Body
 - Brian Bittings—Qigong (Veteran Description)
 - Nino Morris—Qigong (Veteran Description)
 - Nan Lu—Qigong and Energy Gates (Instructional Video)
- Introducing Health for Life: Through One Veteran's Story. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imEROGy6Kmk>

Other Movement Meditations

- Free 10-Minute Audio, Walking Meditation. <https://soundcloud.com/mindfulmagazine/10-minute-walking-meditation>
- Greater Good in Action, Walking Meditation. https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/walking_meditation
- UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center Guided Meditations. <http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>. Has a free 3-minute scan, as well as a 13-minute one for sleep.

Working with Experts

The following links will teach you more about what different professionals do.

- Occupational Therapy. <https://www.aota.org/Conference-Events/OTMonth/what-is-OT.aspx>
- Physical Therapy. <http://www.apta.org/PTCareers/RoleofaPT/>
- Recreational Therapy. <https://nctrc.org/about-ncrtc/about-recreational-therapy/>