

STAYING FIT when you have

a career, a family...homework



BY VALERIE PATRICK

Finding time to take classes, study, and stay in shape is always a challenge. The demands on a busy working student can take a toll on your body. There are many ways to fit in your workout without spending hours at the gym. Taking five minutes every morning to meditate or do yoga stretches can start your day with your circulation going. You don't need a lot of fancy equipment to exercise efficiently

A small floor space is all that is needed for a good Pilates or yoga workout. If you have taken classes and are familiar with some of the moves, then either workout with just a few exercises can boost your energy. The Pilates Ab Series takes only five minutes to complete and will provide you with incredible core strength. Just a few series of the Yoga Sun Salutations will stretch your body and increase your oxygen level. Taking 20 minutes to complete both routines will stimulate serotonin levels needed to control your mood and appetite.

Some great, inexpensive and space saving tools are a stretch resistance band and a Pilates ring. There are a variety of exercises that can be done with either and it's easy to multi-task with these small pieces of equipment. Pilates and yoga exercises use your own body weight as resistance that allows you to take your workout with you wherever you go. Also, a brisk walk back and forth to work or classes or during your lunch break can elevate the heart rate.

Setting the timer to stretch or complete a quick workout during study time is an excellent way to give your mind a break and rejuvenate your body. Short activity bursts throughout your day can keep you physically and mentally alert. When the snack attack hits you instead of reaching for a bag of chips or a candy bar, get up, stretch, walk around or grab your Pilates ring or resistance band and do a round of bicep curls.

If a monthly gym membership is too costly or you can't find the time to take a class at your local studio the next best thing is to invest in a few private lessons. Personal instruction will give you the benefit of scheduling a workout on your time. The instructor can show you ways to optimize your home workout and help you with alignment. They can also help you target the areas that you need to work on the most.

Timing is also important to your exercise regimen. Work out when your body clock tells you it's ready. A ritual of a morning jog works well for some to jumpstart the day. A lunchtime class can be very convenient. An early evening workout might be best after your body has had time to warm up during the day. Restorative yoga stretches before bed can function to set your body up for dreamland. Vary the time of day at first to see what best fits your body and your schedule. Either way, mark your calendar, stay consistent and exercise your way to a stronger and healthier you.

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