

7 Godly Ways to Kick-Start Your Health This Spring

Every February in several cities, you can join a group of people who apparently can't deal with their cabin fever any more. Even though temperatures are downright cold, they take to the beach and yes, they get in the icy water. These Polar Plunge events certainly reflect the determination of the human spirit. Some barely get their feet wet, while others go all the way. It is fun for all and almost always done as a way to raise funds and awareness for a good cause.

Events like this mark the official early start to spring and serve to get participants anticipating the approaching active season. Since an ice-cold swim may not be in your fitness and fellowship plans we have seven tips to help you kick-start your spring. Whether you do some or all of them, you'll find they energize you and warm your relationship with God.

Kick-Start Tip #1 – Stop Self-Sabotage and Choose to Focus on God

"You're only one good decision away from being on track."

Remember: Only God is perfect, so don't spend time beating yourself up when you miss a workout, make poor food choices or even quit for a few days. Turn to God to snap back to reality and overcome ineffective thought patterns. Don't let your appearance define you.

Choose to get back on track faster, forgive yourself quicker and give God all the glory.

Kick-Start Tip #2 – Give Yourself a Free Hour

Get started early on Daylight Savings Time. The official time change doesn't happen until mid-March. Don't wait until then,

instead go ahead and get your day started an hour earlier now. You'll be making time for prayer, Bible reading, journaling and more. The extra effort is well worth it.

The things you don't have time to build into the tight budget of your busy life, all of a sudden can get dedicated time from you. That's time management that isn't managing you. It is giving to God the very first of your day. This is real spiritual fitness and it's just what you need to start a movement that can make a big difference.

Kick-Start Tip #3 – Be 'Alert' to Your Goal and to God

We all love our mobile phones because they have some really cool features that can really make our agendas, our work and our daily activities efficient and better. Imagine if your phone enabled you to talk with God directly. Kick-start your spring by finding some new apps and resources that help you fan the passion of your faith and fitness lifestyle.

Set a specific goal and find an encouraging verse to be your strength for the journey. Make this an alert on your phone (often done in the calendar tool of your phone) to go off every day to remind you to rely on His strength. This can create an intentional time for you to get up from sitting at your desk stretch, move and pray. You can even invite attendees, which means you're not just starting a movement for you but also for others too.

Kick-Start Tip #4 – Plant for Future Favor

More and more large stores now carry live herbs in the produce section of their grocery department almost year round. Your local nursery has even more varieties ready for you fresh from their greenhouse. Convenient and affordable, herbs are a super easy way to make your meals taste wow!

Never mind that it doesn't seem like the season to be gardening. Start some potted herbs in your home now. Find a

room with a generous amount of sunlight, repot the herb into a larger and attractive container, follow simple growing instructions and watch the wonder of God's creation grow daily.

This is healthy flavor that adds amazing taste to your meals and fragrance to your home.

Kick-Start Tip #5 – Follow My Five P's While Eating

1. Pause before you decide to eat and ask yourself if you're really hungry or if you're just feeding your emotions, boredom or stress.

2. Pray before meals. Ask God to help you eat the right foods in the right amounts and for the discipline to take care of your body (His temple). I pray to surrender my appetite to Him daily and remind myself using the acronym . (Surrender Appetite Faithfully Every Day).

3. Portion each meal. Be mindful of the amount of food you're eating. If you want to indulge in a treat, serve yourself a portion on a plate and then put the rest away. Refrain from eating out of containers, bags, boxes or pans.

4. Practice eating slowly. Take smaller bites and chew them between 10 and 20 times. Try setting your fork down between bites and thinking of food as fuel and nourishment rather than comfort or reward.

5. Plan ahead. Make healthy meals as often as you can and always have healthy snacks on hand. Don't wait until you're hungry to find food. I know I rarely make good choices when I am starving.

Kick-Start Tip #6 – Update Your Playlist for Spring

Create a playlist of inspiring Christian music to worship while you work out. Spending time with God while you exercise will melt away your stress and revitalize you.

Organize your new tunes for different fitness activities: cardio, stretching, strength training and more.

If you're not sure how to find Christian workout music, I have free playlists available on Spotify. Many *Faith & Fitness Magazine* articles also have companion podcast interviews with the people featured in the stories.

Kick-Start Tip #7 – Get Growing Behind You

The early spring season is an especially good time of year to pray about how you and your fit lifestyle can strengthen others. When you exercise and eat better you feel better, improve your health and can experience a deeper walk with God. The beautiful thing about merging your faith and fitness together is that all those benefits can, through you, touch other lives.

Plan now for a way you can be physically and spiritually active in someone's life. This might include doing spring house cleaning for someone, scheduling a spa date with a co-worker, or registering yourself and someone else to train together and then run a race for a cause. Do it once and you'll start to find more opportunities to do it. When you kick-start your spring, there's no end to the ways God can use you. {eoa}

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