

Get Off Your Duff: Sitting Is the New Smoking

The more I travel and talk to people across the country about the problem of obesity and being overweight, the more I am convinced that we have become a sitting culture. We simply don't need to move anymore, so we don't. We are flooded with resources and conveniences that have made our lives simple at the cost of keeping us active.

We can now cut the grass on our lawns on a riding lawn mower—or, better yet, can call one of those lawn-care companies to do it for us. We no longer need to change the oil in the car (in many urban areas, you're not even allowed to do it yourself)—we can just drive into one of those 15-minute oil change places, and they'll do it quicker and more efficiently than we ever could.

We do our banking at a drive-thru, get food and coffee at a drive-thru, get our car washed at a drive-thru, and fill our prescriptions at a drive-thru. In some places, we can even order our groceries online and have them carried inside our home. We've become a drive-thru, convenience-based society.

In this technological age, we spend much of our day on our backsides behind a computer or a desk. Many of us sit for hours in our cars while commuting to work. It's certainly common here in the D.C. metropolitan area where I live. And if that wasn't enough, we sit when we get home.

We spend hours and hours sitting in front of the TV or the computer. We play video games or watch movies instead of playing sports, riding bikes or doing other things outside. What happened to the days of bike races, street games, sandlot baseball, pickup basketball games and many other outdoor adventures?

So, what has all this sitting done to us as a society? Well, as Dr. James Levine of the Mayo Clinic has noted, “Researchers have linked sitting for prolonged periods with a number of health problems and premature death from cardiovascular disease.”

For many of us, “Sitting has become the new smoking,” he says.

Just let that sink in for a second—sitting is now being compared to smoking! Who would have thought that while we were making our lives easier and more convenient, we were actually contributing to the downfall of our health?

When I stop and ponder these facts—when I look into the eyes of people who are in bondage to their current physical condition—I am deeply grieved. This is why I decided to do whatever I could to make a difference to bring about positive change to unhealthy and overweight people. This is why I have dedicated my life to helping them get moving and eating healthy.

In my mind, it’s a huge challenge and one that can only be accomplished with Jesus’ help. Jesus is our coach, and the Bible is our guide and playbook.

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Read Scott Boyle’s inspiring story of how he got up and got moving:

“Eighteen months ago, I weighed 242 pounds and had many health issues. When I went in for my annual blood test, the results were not very encouraging—in fact, they were rather frightening. I was told that I had a buildup of plaque in my arteries, and at the time I had no idea how to get rid of it. Later on, I went in for another screening and learned that my risk factor for heart disease was 8 out of 10—with 10 being

the worst it could be. My triglycerides and cholesterol were enormously high. When I learned of my condition, I decided enough is enough. I was approaching my 50th birthday, and I was way too young to die. We have two children and four grandkids, and I didn't want to leave them.

"Two ladies in my church had started a First Place 4 Health program, so my wife and I decided to join. We made a promise to each other that no matter what happened, we would stay in the program. We started slowly. At first I did jumping jacks, bicycle crunches and half-planks. When I got so I could do these simple exercises, I began adding 30 minutes of walking, cardio exercises and lifting dumbbells.

"Today, my wife and I exercise for two hours on Saturdays and at least 30 minutes to an hour during the other days of the week. We started walking and taking our dog with us. We live on top of a hill, so when we walk down at the start of our routine, we have to come back up the hill at the end to get home. I am within 20 pounds of my weight goal according to the guidelines set for my height and age, my cholesterol counts are within normal range, and I am no longer on prescription medicine.

"I have been blessed in that my wife was right with me in reaching my weight-loss goals. She has her own goals, and she's dropped four clothing sizes. We avoid going out to eat too often—we generally only go out on special occasions—and we share in the cooking and help each other eat right. We have limited going to fast-food places and have cut out fried foods. (If you really knew what was in your fast-food burger, you would change your mind about eating it. It's pretty disgusting.)

"My wife and I have also stopped drinking diet soda, which causes cravings for sweets, and instead drink Red Goji tea. We also drink plenty of water. When exercising we avoid drinking Gatorade, which is loaded with sugar for energy. There are 14

grams of sugar in 8 ounces of Gatorade, and you would need to exercise a long time to burn it all off.

“I have reduced my intake of sodium to almost none. Before joining First Place 4 Health, I had to take pills for acid reflux, but today I have no problems with it whatsoever. This is because I stopped eating at least three hours prior to going to bed, which prevents acid reflux from developing and gives my body a chance to burn some of the calories I took in at my last meal. I drink only two cups of coffee a day, and I add them to my fluid intake. I also try to limit my daily sugar intake to only 15 grams, which is very hard to do.

“Let me warn you: although it is tempting to do so, don’t buy into fad weight-loss programs. Remember that the extra pounds came on over time, so it will take time to get them off. Build a habit of eating healthy and exercising each day. It takes 21 days to build a habit, but you can do this. I have faith in you! And if you feel angry with yourself ... good! Use that anger to motivate yourself to go the extra mile and spend that extra minute on the treadmill. If you are upset with yourself, you will push yourself forward.

“Speaking of workouts, you don’t need to be rich to exercise, nor do you have to have the most expensive equipment available. Remember Rocky Balboa in those old *Rocky* movies? Like him, you can grab a log and do lunges with it, or you can put some rocks in a wheelbarrow, deflate the tires, and push that around. You will get a workout.

“Whatever you do, don’t give up. Exercise every day. Act as if you are a contestant on *The Biggest Loser*, where no excuses are tolerated. Plan your walking time. Walk alone or with a spouse or with one of your children or with a friend. Organize walks with other men who are also intent on moving their bodies.

“You can do it! I know you can. I know you can become a

healthy man of God. Remember, in Philippians 4:13, Paul states that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Be in constant prayer to Jesus, for He is your strength, your Rock.

(Read Scott's full version in *Get Off the Couch*, which starts on page 172.)

Steve Reynolds is the senior pastor of Capital Baptist Church in Annandale, Va. He is the author of the books *Bod4God* and *Get Off the Couch*. He is also the creator of the *Losing to Live Weight-Loss Competition*. Steve has lost more than 120 pounds and has led his church to lose over nine tons of weight. Contact him at sreynolds@ or call 703-568-7484.