

How the Busiest Moms Can Still Get Fit

This week, I have the honor of speaking to a group of MOPS. I should clarify ... “MOPS” stands for “Mothers of Preschoolers” (I haven’t spoken to inanimate objects since I was a little girl and taught kindergarten to my “Winnie the Pooh” stuffed animals, and a few Beanie Babies).

I was asked to speak about the importance of exercise and healthy eating and how moms do in fact show love to their children and husbands when they devote time to taking care of themselves, as counterintuitive as that may seem. The fitter they become, the better equipped they will be to face life’s challenges, both routine and unexpected, with confidence, vigor, energy, and strength.

In preparation for this talk, I sent out a two-question survey that posed the following questions:

- What is your number one reason for getting fit?
- What is the biggest hindrance to getting your workout in?
- 10-minute AMRAP (“AMRAP” means “As Many Rounds as Possible”)
- 20 reverse lunges (10 each leg)
- 15 goblet squats (holding kettlebell, dumbbell, or other weighted object, such as a heavy book or purse)
- 5 burpees

Fifty-one percent of those surveyed said their main motivation for wanting to get fit is to be healthy for their families. To the second question, 51 percent answered that “Time” is their biggest workout obstacle.

In a separate article, I thoroughly explore the subject of motivation, and the lack thereof, and submit that our primary

reason for pursuing fitness should be because it is honoring to the Lord. I write that, *“when we choose to neglect exercise, we choose to disobey the call to keep our bodies, our temples, tidy and strong. By forgoing exercise, we set ourselves up for a future of poor health and, ultimately, a shorter life devoid of the strength, energy, focus, and confidence that work to advance God’s kingdom.”*

Since, as I said, I’ve written previously on motivation, today I will focus on the majority’s answer to Question No. 2: *“Time.”* One of the Powerpoint slides I created bears this simple sentence in big, bold, inescapable letters:

“A 15-minute workout is just percent of your day.”

In other words, generally speaking, we have no excuse to skip exercise.

I am not a mom, but I know more than a few of them who have chosen (notice that it is a conscious decision) to find the time in their busy schedules to work out. From making use of their gym’s childcare service while they take a class or hit the weights, to making a fitness studio out of their living room while the baby is napping, or letting the kids double as enthusiastic workout buddies, countless moms have found effective ways to make—and keep—exercise a part of their daily routine.

To improve our heart health and prevent the risk of heart disease and stroke, the American Heart Association recommends that we get 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week, or—here’s the good news—just 75 minutes of vigorous exercise each week. Alternatively, you can opt for a combination of these two modes of exercise, switching between moderate and vigorous activity for 30 minutes a day, five times a week.

When it comes to helping people make time for working out, I’m a big fan of the AHA’s middle suggestion, because 75 minutes vigorous exercise can be attained with just five 15-minute

sessions a week! The kicker, however, is that these short-duration workouts need to be intense, meaning heart rate-elevating, muscle-pumping, perspiration-producing, endorphin-releasing workouts, the kind that may be tough while they're transpiring, but will make you feel oh so glad you stuck it out when the fifteen minutes are up. There's nothing like finishing a challenging workout, knowing you gave it everything you had and that you made it happen despite a myriad of voices, chores, excuses, and distractions trying to pull you away from it.

"No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way." (Heb. 12:11, NLT).

As I mentioned above, the time to work out is already there, a hidden treasure accessibly buried within the 1,440 minutes of your day. It's your choice to discover it, dust it off, and give it fifteen itty bitty minutes under the spotlight with no interruptions or spontaneous plans, and no backing down because you "don't feel like it" or would prefer to start tomorrow.

Remember, we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, "holy and pleasing" to God. This, the Bible says, is "[our] true and proper worship" (Romans 12:1, NIV). Exercise is an act of obedience, not necessarily convenience. It's a discipline, like Hebrews says, that produces a rich harvest of health, boasting benefits for your entire being, from the way you think, look, and feel, to how you overcome sickness, prevent disease, and interact with your children's children when you're seventy years old.

I pray that you choose obedience. For many moms I know, working out began as a chore, a thorn in their side that caused unwanted pain in their muscles, sweat on their brows, and even stress in their life. It took weeks, if not months,

for them to adjust not only to the workouts themselves, but to allowing themselves the time to do them.

Many moms initially feel guilty for not devoting every minute they can to tending to their children's needs or spending precious hours playing with them, reading to them, etc. But as they continue to trust that they are actually showing love to their families by taking care of their bodies, they begin to enjoy their fifteen or so fitness-only minutes. And sure enough, working out transforms from duty to *joy*, from burden to *blessing*.

I would like to give you a sample workout that you can do at home, one that I hope will prove to you that fifteen minutes truly is all it takes to challenge your body and become fitter, one repetition at a time. (For over 100 at-home workouts, check out my book, *Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness*).

First of all, it's extremely important to warm up before you begin any sort of physical activity. But don't worry—the warmup is part of the fifteen minutes! Never, never skip the warmup as doing so could result in injury.

Warmup

- 2 rounds
- 20 arm circles forward
- 20 arm circles reverse
- 10 mountain-climbers (right/left is 1 rep)
- 20 butt-kicks (20 each side)
- 20 high-knees (20 each side)
- 10 scorpions (5 each side)
- 5 air squats

Workout

Exercise Instructions:

Arm Circles (Forward and Backward)

- a. Stand in a neutral position with feet hip-width apart. Your arms should be straight out to the sides so your body forms a "T."
- b. Begin making slow circles in a forward motion with your arms, then gradually make larger ones and complete the given number of repetitions.
- c. Repeat in the opposite direction.

Mountain-Climbers

- a. Place your hands on the floor, slightly wider than shoulder-width. Step out with your feet to assume a plank position.
- b. While holding your upper body in place, alternating bringing the right and left knees toward your chest.
- c. Keep your hips down and increase the intensity by performing the movement faster as you feel comfortable.

Butt-Kicks

- a. Begin by jogging normally, either in place or traveling for a short distance.
- b. Then begin raising your heels up toward your bottom as you jog, using rapid, forceful movements. Again, you may either do these in place or traveling.

High Knees

- a. Begin jogging, either in place or over a short distance.
- b. Drive one knee up toward your chest and quickly return it to the ground. Follow immediately with the opposite knee.
- c. Continue alternating for the given number of repetitions.

Scorpions

- a. Lie face-down on a mat or on the floor. Stretch your arms out to either side, forming a T.
- b. Lift your left leg away from the floor as far as you can, then move it to the right, crossing it over your right leg. As

you do this, twist your hips to the right, allowing the left leg to touch the ground on the right side.

c. Return your left leg back to starting position and repeat the movement with your right leg.

Air Squats

a. Stand with your feet spread apart at a distance slightly wider than the shoulders. Position your feet so that your toes angle out. This angle varies from person to person, but should be about 30 degrees. Keep your weight on the heels to prevent yourself from rolling up onto the balls of your feet.

b. Keep your chest up, shoulders back, head up. This helps promote a nice, safe, intact lumbar curve.

c. Place arms straight out in front of your chest. The arms should be in a comfortable position as they act as counter balance to the motion of the exercise.

d. Bend your knees as you lower yourself down. Pretend there is a chair behind you that you're reaching back to sit on. Your knees should track over your feet and never jut out over them. In other words, your knees should be pointing in the same direction as your toes. If you find your knees starting to cave in, focus on pushing them out. A good way to achieve this is by imagining you are tearing the floor apart with your feet.

e. The push back up should be generated from your hamstrings and glutes. Your chest and head should remain pointing straight forward. As you rise, your arms will probably lower back to your sides naturally. Make sure your knees keep tracking with your toes and do not begin to buckle inwards. Also be sure and keep your lumbar curve intact (curved). Generally speaking, if you have your chest and head up, your lumbar curve will be in the correct position.

Reverse Lunges

a. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, torso upright with

arms hanging straight at your sides.

b. Take a slow, controlled lunge backward with one foot.

c. Lower your hips so that your front leg becomes parallel to the floor. At this point your right knee should be positioned directly over your ankle and your front foot should be pointing straight ahead. Your left knee should be bent at a 90-degree angle and pointing toward the floor. Your left heel should be lifted.

d. Push through both feet to straighten your legs. Bring your left foot back to meet your right in the starting position. Repeat on the other side, and continue alternating for the given number of repetitions.

Goblet Squats

a. Hold the weight at your chest. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, torso upright.

b. With the kettlebell against your chest, squat down with the goal of having your elbows slide down along the inside of your knees. It's okay to have the elbows push the knees out a bit as you descend. Focus on keeping your back flat.

c. Rise out of the squat by driving through your heels.

Burpees

a. Lower your body down using proper squat form. Place hands on the ground in front of you.

b. Jump your feet back to a plank position, then quickly lower your chest to the ground.

c. Push yourself back up to a plank position and jump your feet back in toward your hands.

d. Jump back up and simultaneously clap your hands behind your head. Stand all the way, extending the hips fully before beginning your next rep.

NOTE: To modify this exercise, you may eliminate the push-up

component. To further modify for beginners, you may also walk your feet out and back in instead of jumping them out and in.

Diana Anderson-Tyler is the author of Creation House's Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness, Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness, and her latest book, Immeasurable: Diving into the Depths of God's Love. Her popular website can be found at [www.dianataylor.com](#), and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925. Diana can be reached on Twitter.

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