

How to Find Some Flexibility

It is 5:30 a.m. and the alarm is going off one hour earlier than I'm used to. I groan at the thought of leaving my warm, comfortable bed. I realize it's still dark, and that thought does not sit well with me. Mutiny runs through my veins as I remember what the doctor said: "You need to be walking—not around the house, but around the block."

My body slowly rolls out of bed; I frown at the stiffness I experience. It's not just my body that's stiff; it's my attitude. I'm angry because my husband isn't getting up with me; he'll sleep for another hour. I don't want to do this alone; I want company. This morning it's all about me, my needs, my wants, and nothing is going my way. I'm not sure why, but I'm angry with God too.

In semi-darkness, I sift through the clothes at the foot of the bed to find my sweat suit and my tennis shoes. Quietly, I get dressed so as not to disturb Prince Charming and soft-pedal it downstairs.

Walking out on the front porch, it's dreary outside. Fine—it suits my attitude. I try to remember whether I'm supposed to stretch before or after I walk, and the unpleasant thought hits me: "You've got to be more flexible." I'm pushing through major anger, and I'm supposed to listen to my inner voice? I don't think so. What does be more flexible mean, anyway?

The stiffness is painful, and walking hurts, but I try to apply the Scripture, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Nevertheless, I gripe as I start walking: "Your body aches, you're overweight, old age is creeping around the corner, and you're not ready!"

My husband is already on the road when I return. I sit down to eat oatmeal with fresh blueberries, but what I want is a blueberry muffin with fried eggs, potatoes and a thick piece

of country ham.

How did I get in this place of idiocy? It didn't happen overnight. Grabbing fast food after a stressful day required no planning, it was cheap, and there were no dishes to wash. Then I justified watching TV for a couple hours and then off to bed.

After a while, there was no time for the Bible; reading ancient manuscripts required me to think, and hard work had lost its appeal. I had become unwilling to do what was required. Mental flexibility is what I needed, and without it, my Spirit-life suffered.

When I came back from that first walk, I looked up *flexible* in the dictionary. To be flexible means that I respond readily to change or external influence—I'm willing to become adaptable.

As I read the definition and meditated on what it means to be flexible, I became aware of how stubborn I had become. It reminded me of the Bible story of Moses leading the people of Israel into the wilderness. They had behaved badly, and I could see that I had become like them. I knew the verse: "I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people."

I could have stayed stubborn, which had led me down the path of inflexibility, both physically and spiritually. I could have stayed sedentary and gambled with the arthritis and what it can do to my body. I could have continued my walk away from developing a strong Spirit-life.

But the phrase *Be more flexible* would not let me go. It had become my motto. I decided I wanted to be in as much control of my health as I could. Deep down, I yearned to know more about God. I also knew the only person who could make these changes was me, not my husband or my girlfriends.

That was a few months ago. Since that day, when I decided I

would be more flexible, my life has changed. To my delight, I found that my decisions also shaped my relationship with my husband. We've begun walking together. We even started enjoying fresh vegetables and fruit salad for dessert. Now I find I'm learning more about God with each passing day.

Tips to Be More Flexible

Physically. Stay active—keep the muscles stretched and toned. Establish a set of flexibility exercises that suit your body composition. Start slowly, and build up your repetitions. Simple tip: Walk at night; it stimulates your metabolism at a time when the body is slowing down, and you will burn more calories.

Eat healthy—give your body the nutrients and fuel it needs to serve you well. Change your eating patterns. Simple tip: Instead of an established three big meals per day, begin to eat every two hours with small meals and have a healthy snack in between.

Spiritually. Be proactive—stay aware of the fact that a relationship is a two-way street. God makes it clear in the Scriptures that He wants us to know Him—that means He has a plan to know us. What is that plan? Simple tip: Ask yourself what it means to actively pursue a relationship with God and then do it. Seek Him out.

Strength training—any muscle will atrophy without use, including your brain. Engage your mind. Stop avoiding the hard questions. Simple tip: Find a book that addresses the questions about God that people are afraid to ask.

Next Steps

Check with your doctor and get approval on your exercise plan to make sure it is right for you. Get a friend to walk with you. Educate yourself. We live in an information-based culture; go online for exercise information. Visit a bookstore

and buy a book on exercise—spend some time at the library or a used bookstore. Simple tip: Read back issues on the website.

A tree that is flexible will bow in the wind and not break. A body that is flexible will stretch and not strain or tear the muscles. I try to remember this: “Jesus replied, ‘You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God’” (Matthew 22:29, NIV).

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