

Igniting This Fire Can Change Your World—Inside and Out

This world is filled with fitness enthusiasts. Some are world-class athletes, full of God-given talent, impeccable skill, remarkable mental and physical strength and an innate sense of discipline. Others, while not as extraordinary, are nonetheless passionate about exercising and keeping themselves in stellar shape. They seem to have no problem bursting from their beds at 5 a.m. and hitting the gym or pounding the pavement before they head to work. They eat their veggies, take their vitamins and get an adequate amount of sleep each night.

I think we would all agree that the people I've just described are a rarity in today's largely sedentary society, an unfortunate fact that is exacerbated by many Americans' McDonaldized love affair with convenience and instant gratification. Eating well and moving often go against the grain of our culture, making the fitness lifestyle look entirely foreign and unattainable. We look around at the athletes, the gym bunnies, the meat heads and all the "perfect" physiques on magazine covers and social media feeds and are often overcome with self-loathing and comparisonitis.

Fit Fact: The average American spends an estimated \$1,200 on fast food each year.

"No matter what I eat or how often I work out, I'll never look like she does."

"I don't have time to work out. I might as well not even try."

"I've tried working out in the past and was never able to stick with it. I'm just not motivated enough."

"I hate working out. Why put myself through it?"

“Maybe one day I’ll work out consistently. It’s just not a good time right now.”

Have any of these lines ever run through your head? I know they have for me. That’s why I’m writing this post. It’s time to extinguish the flames of laziness, comparison, self-hatred and fear and ignite the fire of discipline, contentment, confidence, and courage stirring within each one of us.

We’re told several times in Scripture to glorify God with our bodies, so why not start today? Here are a few suggestions to help you fan those flames.

1. Establish Clear Goals

“All who have accomplished great things have had a great aim, have fixed their gaze on a goal which was high, one which sometimes seemed impossible.” –Orison Swett Marden

There are copious amounts of psychology research out there showing that the most motivating goals are clearly defined and time-bound (I know we don’t like the word “deadlines,” but they are undeniably effective when it comes to yielding results).

Goals can either be geared toward your behaviors, such as getting to the gym a certain number of times per week, or on a particular outcome, like losing X amount of fat.

Most of us will find behaviorally focused goals the more motivating of the two. However, there’s nothing more powerful than a strong “why” driving you, so always keep the desired outcome in mind.

Having specific, well-defined goals and daily, actionable steps to reach them is critical to maintaining a steady walk along the fitness path not just for a season, but for a lifetime.

2. Don't Just Think—Take Action

“The path to success is to take massive, determined actions.”
—Tony Robbins

As wonderful as plans of action are, they mean nothing if we're too afraid to act on them. We must refuse to over-analyze and think of ways our goals might fail. So many wrong decisions happen when we quench our fire in favor of going the safe route or listening to others' opinions (opinions likely rooted in their own self-doubt and bitterness).

The Lord rewards those who step out in faith to obey Him, even when failure seems certain and when doubts pour down like a deluge. Don't believe me? Turn to His Word (Hebrews 11 is a great place to start). It is filled with numerous examples of men and women who made the active decision to abandon fear and let faith lead the way.

Fit Quote: If your next move doesn't scare you a bit, it's probably not big enough.

3. Don't Be Driven by Vanity

Slim arms, sculpted shoulders, six-pack abs, a perky rear end. Those things are great, but in the eternal scheme of things, they're small and ultimately meaningless. We're not to work out and eat right to acquire more desirable bodies and be the envy of our peers. We're to do so because healthy bodies enable us to better serve and love others and thereby glorify our Creator.

Just because many worldly people pursue fitness for reasons of ego and vanity doesn't mean the fitness lifestyle is off-limits for Christians. On the contrary, we should make it our mission every time we're in the gym to point others to Christ. Who says gyms can't be miniature mission fields? Who says conversations about our faith can't happen at the smoothie bar or squat rack?

The world is accustomed to seeing fitness that's motivated by selfishness and inspired by pride. Let those around you be pleasantly surprised when they learn you work out for a reason that far transcends physical appearances and the praises of men.

"Everyone who strives for the prize exercises self-control in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one" (1 Cor. 9:25).

I hope you've found this helpful. If you ever have any questions, comments or would like me to pray for you, please contact me via email. You can reach me at contact@. I always love hearing from you! {eo}

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.dianatyler.com and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925.