

reclaiming joy in your life

Got the blahs? Discover ways to increase the pleasure in your days.

Are your weeks filled with all work and no play? Do you find yourself being serious all of the time? Are you seeking new approaches for finding joy?

Learn how other fitness professionals add fun back into their lives when they realize they're stuck in a rut. Try their ideas—or let them inspire you to come up with your own.

Spending Quiet Time

Many fitness pros find that being still helps increase the joy they experience on a day-to-day basis.

"I find that sometimes less is more," says Terry Stocker of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. "Though, like many other fitness professionals, I am extroverted and motivational, I must spend daily time *alone* and *quiet*. I silence the voices in my head that regret things in the past or worry about the future, and I increase the pleasure I get here and now. Contemplative moments 'recharge my batteries' for the work I do with students and clients."

Pauline Caamaño of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, appreciates quiet time in the morning. "I wake up early one day of the week, contemplate the rising of the sun, drink some hot tea and meditate for 15 minutes," she says.

Linda Parker of New York City also finds it helpful to be still. "I sit by a sparkling lake and let the sunshine and breeze hit my face while I hear birds, water slapping against the shoreline or simply nothing at all," she says.

Using the Power of Words

Other people have discovered that reading or writing can soothe them. "I find that writing poetry helps me express emotions that may be difficult to articulate," says Ingrid Williams, a health, fitness and wellness consultant with Fitness Factor in North Charleston, South Carolina.

Helene Byrne of Oakland, California, author of *Exercise After Pregnancy: How to Look and Feel Your Best* (Celestial Arts 2001), adds joy to her life by starting each workday with a quick spiritual centering technique. "On my home page I receive a

'quote of the day,'" she says. "I read the inspirational passage and then take a few moments to apply the message to whatever problem, issue or goal I wish to accomplish that day. The quotes are from great philosophers, writers and world leaders, from ancient history through modern times. It's like having the wisdom of the ages at your fingertips. Many times the quotes have helped me broaden my perspective to better understand the needs of others, increase my sense of optimism and self-worth, and quiet my internal critic. Most important, the quotes help me to clarify my core values and to live by them."

Being Playful With Kids

Spending time with children brings happiness and laughter to different fitness pros.

"I am a single parent of two, and a full-time college student, employed part-time," says JoAnn Kemaldeen of Minot, North Dakota. "Life gets serious way too

tips from a life coach

Does everything seem ho-hum, but you're not sure what would be the best way for *you* personally to have fun? Try these suggestions from *Wish It, Dream It, Do It: Turn the Life You're Living Into the Life You Want* (Fireside 2004) by Leslie Levine, a life coach in Northbrook, Illinois.

- **Go Back to Your Childhood.** Remember something from your childhood that brought you pure, unencumbered joy. Think about how you can bring that old fun back to life. You may not have access to the same tree house, but maybe you can evoke a similar feeling by creating a private nook in your home. Perhaps it's an old-fashioned tea party that will help replenish your fun jar. It doesn't matter what you come up with; allowing yourself the pleasure is what really counts.
- **Try Something Once.** If you've never tested your green thumb, plant some bulbs or herbs. Go to a baseball game and act as if you know exactly what's happening. Put a fake tattoo on your forearm, and check out the expressions on those you love (and those you don't). Want to be more adventurous? You don't have to be a thrill seeker to *imagine* something you might do once in your life—and even the imagining is enough to put you in a joyful state of mind.
- **Step Out of Your Routine.** Do something out of the ordinary. Conspire with a friend to catch a matinee . . . in the middle of a workday! Take yourself out for dinner and order breakfast. Let your children get *you* ready for bed. Try to juggle in front of someone you know. Sing at the top of your lungs when you're driving or washing your hair.

often due to many things—especially finances. When I need to be playful, I drop what I am doing and go shoot hoops with my 11-year-old son. Afterward, we come in and watch Disney channel comedies. Movement, being with my son and having some good laughs will usually put things in the right perspective.”

Williams also finds that kids bring a welcome diversion to her world. “Sharing ‘girls-only’ time with my adolescent nieces brings me a lot of joy,” she says. “We’ll spend time watching a movie, playing board games, skating or bowling.”

Bonding With Adults

Setting dates with friends or loved ones cheers up many fitness pros.

Linda Freeman, IDEA presenter and group fitness committee member and the owner of Guru Fitness® in Green Bay, Wisconsin, says she’ll “call up gal pals and suggest a night out for dancing. We always have a riot just going out and dancing all night, and catching up on girl talk in between.”

Freeman also makes sure not to forget romance. “Chances are if I’m swamped in work and taking everything seriously, I probably have not had much alone time with my husband,” she says. “So I’ll schedule a date for just the two of us. It might be a hockey game, a romantic dinner or an outing to a sledding hill.”

Getting Physical

Taking care of their own bodies is another way fitness pros increase their bliss.

The Pleasures of Pampering. “I get a deep-tissue massage at least once a month—more often when needed—and sometimes accompany it with a pedicure and a manicure,” says Williams. “This really relaxes me and soothes my aching muscles. I try to schedule the massage late in the evening so that I can go straight home, watch a good movie and drift off to sleep. I feel rejuvenated in the morning.”

Making Time to Move. Scheduling formal—or informal—workouts can help get rid of the doldrums. “I take a walk or hike in the mountains,” says Parker, “or I put on music and dance my butt off. I literally shake it all off. When I sit down, I feel very energized and very moved—and out of my rut!”

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ideas for finding joy

Ask readers of *IDEA Fitness Journal* how they break free of a rut, and you’ll get some great suggestions! Below are interesting ideas from two fitness professionals.

“When I need more joy, I step back into the world of simple things,” says Linda Caldwell, fitness instructor at the Rady Jewish Community Centre and Image Fitness in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and editor for the Manitoba Society of Seniors. She shares these uplifting strategies:

- joining friends for a coffee date filled with laughter and stories
- planning a family get-together for no reason
- walking with your partner on a summer night
- watching a feel-good movie that brings a smile to your face
- allowing yourself a day of pampering
- visiting animals in a pet shelter
- volunteering

Linda Hayden of Durham, New Hampshire, finds fun in the following activities:

- playing with kids
- listening to new music
- going for a “walk and talk” with a friend
- calling friends you have not seen in a long time and planning a reunion
- planting flowers
- throwing away junk and making space for new stuff
- throwing away clothes that you hate, that don’t fit or that you haven’t worn in 10 years, and then going shopping
- getting your hair done—and choosing a new cut or color or just a relaxing style change
- watching a “happy cry” movie (crying releases lots of emotions, but the uplifting message of the movie still makes you feel good)
- inviting someone to dinner
- baking food and giving it away to those less fortunate than you