

# Redefining Exercise

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Feel Your Personal Best  
**Mini Guide**



Healthy Lifestyle Mini Guide  
on

**Redefining Exercise**  
with Alice Greene

Welcome,

This mini guide is a quick and easy way to gain a new perspective to healthy living. There are many ways to be and feel healthy, and even more ways to be fit.

Instead of feeling limited by rigid guidelines, I will introduce you to the idea that you have choices and you can give yourself permission to do what is right for you and your body.

This guide has 5 short sections, each about 2 pages long. Each section will challenge conventional thinking and offer a holistic, positive and individual approach to fitness. You will discover that the very things that may have kept you from succeeding or feeling good about your ability to succeed are beliefs that you can change.

Along with each section is a place to write down your thoughts, such as things you realize are true for you or ways you want to make some changes in your life.

What makes getting and staying fit so difficult is as much having a resistant and perfectionist mindset as it is a physical limitation. Once you have permission to listen to your own body, change your beliefs, go at your own pace and choose things you enjoy - without fear of judgment, then you can start to move more easily and successfully.

By reading this mini guide on Redefining Exercise you are taking a step to change your lifestyle. You are also opening your mind to the possibility there is a better way to make that change.

I think you will be pleasantly surprised by what you discover.

  
America's Healthy Lifestyle Coach



Positive Thinking ☉ Self-honoring Choices ☉ Life long Results

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## Getting Fit Needn't be a Grind

What are the first things you think of when you hear the word fit?

What about the terms fitness or exercise?

How about the possibility of liking exercise?

### Anyone Can be a Success Story and Enjoy It

I am one of those thin people that look like she's never been unfit or fat. But that isn't my story. I grew up one of the largest girls in school and struggled to keep my weight at a respectable level. I was consoled by the fact I had "large bones". I discovered low-fat dieting in the late 1980s, and that brought down the weight but left me flabby. During the 90s I did the gym routine, had a personal trainer and even bought home equipment during those years, and I always meant to keep it up. I also walked a fair amount, but I probably only spent a couple of years exercising seriously enough to change my body fat ratio.

Then when I hit my forties, the weight came back and I was faced with a decision. I decided to work out regularly no matter what, and I became a success story. It took a while, but I discovered I could and wanted to do more to get into better shape. And in time my body completely changed and became fit. From this grew a passion for fitness and then a decision to get certified as a trainer, fitness coach, and then eating coach. My family was rather stunned by my new found occupation. Wasn't I the one that hated to exercise? That was me.

### Exercise Doesn't Have to Unpleasant

Do you like to exercise? If you had asked me that question ten years ago, I would have given you an emphatic no. But something changed for me. I discovered the pleasure of exercise by doing it in a way that suited me best. What I learned is that exercise doesn't have to be boring, painful, sweaty or excruciating. In fact it is best to do exercise in moderation and in a way that brings the most enjoyment and exhilaration. Sounds like a novel concept doesn't it? But it wasn't that long ago that the way most people got exercise was by going outside for a hike or bike ride, playing sports or games, and getting out on the slopes or the water.

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### Exercise Doesn't Have to be a Tough Workout

Our ideas about exercise have changed because of busy lifestyles and gym memberships. Now when most of us think about exercise, what comes to mind is a tough workout with gym equipment, fast routines, and working up a hard sweat. Unfortunately that leads to burn out, injury, disappointment and quitting. Think of the last time you joined a gym or bought gym equipment with enthusiasm? How long did you stick with it? If you are like the average person, it was less than two months. Few are still at it after six months. Why is that? What kept you from sticking with it? These are things you want to understand, so you can figure what feels good to you and what will motivate you to stick with it in the future.

### Be Active Doing Something You Enjoy Instead

If you are like most people, the biggest issue is you don't enjoy "working out" or you got hurt doing it. For me, I actually like gym equipment. I just don't like using it at the gym. What is important is determining what works for you. What would feel good or enjoyable to you? Walking and dancing often fall into this category. I also have clients that have rediscovered their hoola hoop, gotten excited by fun videos or found a new passion by taking up kayaking.

There are so many ways to be active that get your heart rate up into the aerobic fat-burning zone. This week, think of one or two aerobic activities you've always liked to do (it could date back to grade school or high school), and then remember how good it felt to do it and to be active. This is the feeling you want to have when you exercise.

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## It's Not About the Bike

What do you feel or believe about exercising regularly?

Where does that come from?

### Learn What Gets in the Way of Being Active

In Lance Armstrong's autobiography *It's Not About the Bike*, he writes about his battle with cancer and how his biking career is less about biking and more about his spirit and making choices. He learned a lot about himself from having cancer and persevered by facing it head on with enormous courage. As a result he came to value the lessons he learned from cancer and says at one point in the book that it made him more alive.

Exercise can also make you feel more alive, if you let it. But instead most people avoid it, and from that avoidance there are lessons to be learned and ways to address what gets in the way of being active.

### Change Your Perceptions by Changing Beliefs

When I ask people what they think about exercise, the first things they say are "it's boring", "it's hard work", "I don't like it", "there's no time", "it makes me sweat", or "I can't stick with it". Those are strong feelings and beliefs that keep them from wanting to exercise. Exercise doesn't have to be so hard or unpleasant. In fact it can be quite enjoyable if you choose it to be that way. So when people tell me they don't like exercise, I become curious why someone feels the way they do.

The reasons for not liking exercise can stem back to childhood and memories of PE class or forced family bike rides. They can be from working out too hard on gym equipment, believing that was the only option to get more fit. Or it can be from going to the gym when it's really crowded. Everyone has their own perceptions from their own experiences. What is interesting is that you can change your perceptions by changing your beliefs.

### Challenge Your Beliefs for More Choices

Let's say you perceive exercise to be boring because the only form of exercise you think is available to you at home is walking, which you aren't fond of it. Having the belief that walking is the only thing you can do is limiting your

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creativity and options. What if you changed your belief? You can choose instead to believe there are many types of aerobic exercise you can do at home and you can choose which ones you enjoy most, like roller blading in the summer, jumping on a rebounder during the winter and doing yoga year round?

Or what if you believe you have to exercise for at least 45 minutes for it to be worth it, but you don't have the time? You could just as easily believe something else. You could determine that exercising for 25 minutes and doing more stairs and further walks in the parking lot will also meet your goal. Some people believe that they have to start out exercising for at least 20 minutes, but that may be too much initially. It is ok to start out at 10 minutes when you are new to exercise or to a piece of equipment. When beliefs aren't so black and white but are more fluid, it is easier to succeed. What are your beliefs around exercise, and how are they keeping you from being active?

#### Thoughts and Feelings are the Real Obstacle

I have found that the reason people struggle to get regular exercise is more about their thoughts and feelings, than it is about exercising. It isn't about the Stairmaster, elliptical trainer, treadmill or bike. The struggle to exercise isn't simply about scheduling time, having access to exercise gear, getting things prepared in advance or even having a workout partner. There is more to it, and it isn't always easy to see what the obstacle really is.

For many women, what gets in the way is the belief that there is no time to take care of themselves. They put themselves last – after the kids, family, job and other social commitments they take on. Everything else is more important and has to be done. But this belief compromises their health, looks, self-esteem, and ultimately their happiness. At some point they are faced with the harsh reality that they have to take care of themselves or suffer the consequences.

Unfortunately this is often after they've put on a lot of weight that makes taking care of themselves even tougher, because at this point they may feel they don't deserve it, may be afraid to get started, or may be physically challenged to be active.

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What is Keeping You From What You Want?

Do you wish you exercised enough to feel better or even great? Do you want more confidence and self-esteem? If so, what keeps you from exercising?

Think of the beliefs you have about taking care of your health and making time for yourself.

Don't judge yourself. Simply be open to learning what is getting in the way of reaching your goals and feeling more alive.

It Isn't About the Bike or Exercising

It isn't about the bike; it is about your feelings and beliefs that keep you from getting on it in the first place.

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## Taking Fitness to Extremes with Poor Results

### Boot Camp is The Latest Fad

It is like having a déjà vu experience from the 1980s when high impact aerobics was the rage and women were burning themselves out in Jane Fonda outfits.

Today it is another form of extreme fitness as people flock in droves to boot camps and watch in record numbers the Biggest Loser and other weight loss reality shows. Pushing oneself to physical extremes is fine if you are an athlete, or at least conditioned enough to avoid injury and eating enough to sustain the amount of energy being extended. Unfortunately most people participating in these events jump in without much preparation and then limit their food intake to achieve extreme results. The sad truth is their results are often short lived, as if they did extreme dieting.

### What's Wrong with this Picture?

A case in point is a woman I know that exercises for at least an hour everyday and sometimes twice a day, averaging 300 or more minutes of cardio a week. On an exertion scale of 1-10 (with 10 being maxed out), she was working out at a level 8 or 9 most of the time. When we started talking, she said "I feel like I'm deteriorating. I feel terrible, and I'm not losing any weight. In fact I'm gaining it." So I asked her about how much she was eating, and she said she stuck pretty closely to the South Beach diet and would go back to phase I regularly to try to get better control of her weight gain. But it wasn't working, and she was terribly frustrated. She also did yoga and Pilates regularly, in order to get better results and have a balanced program.

So what is wrong with this picture? It seems like she's doing all the right things if you follow the boot camp and reality show regimens. But in fact she's creating an internal fat storing machine and stressing her body, which only increases her body's drive to store more fat.

Let me explain. I'll start with the primary reason for her weight gain, which is her depressed metabolism.

### When Over-Exercising Drives Down Metabolism

While it would seem that she'd have a high metabolism because of all her exercise, it is severely reduced because she isn't getting enough food to support her exercise levels. When the amount of calories coming in is significantly less

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than what the body needs, the metabolic rate falls in an attempt to conserve calories and rations it out to the parts of the body that must have it. Each time she went back to phase I of South Beach she was eating below the minimum amount she needed to survive, much less to support her exercise routine. She burns over 2400 calories a day, but eats less than 1200. That is a huge deficit, which is causing her body to assume she's in a starvation mode. When we are in that mode, our body does two things: keeps the metabolic rate very low and hoards as much fat as possible. Fat will get converted to create energy as a last resort, but the more the body has to do this, the more it hoards it.

### Carbohydrates are Your Primary Source of Energy

A second reason for her weight gain is her choice of diet. She limits her carbohydrates, and that is a problem for her metabolism. Our main source of fuel – or energy – is carbohydrates, not protein and fat. We need at least half our diet to be carbohydrates, preferably complex carbs, to fuel our metabolism that in turn gives our cells and internal systems (digestive, circulatory, neurological, brain etc) the energy they need. By avoiding the carbs, her body isn't getting easy access to the calories it needs. This is also a reason why she doesn't feel well.

### Going to the Max Leads to Weight Gain

A third reason is the intensity level of her work outs. At the high intensity level of 8-9 on an exertion scale of 1-10, she was burning up whatever carbohydrates she had, but not fat. That is because when you are over exerting yourself, you are no longer in the fat-burning zone. The fat-burning zone only occurs when you moderately exercise between 4 and 8 on the exertion scale. So she wasn't burning off the fat she was hoarding. Instead she was stressing her body, which leads us to the fourth reason for her weight gain. When the body is chronically stressed it releases a fat-storing hormone called cortisol from the adrenals, which adds to the fat storing already taking place.

### Extreme Fitness Isn't for Everyone

So the moral to this story is if you are going to participate in extreme fitness, do so with a plan to include enough calories during each day to support your energy demands, and also have an understanding of how much is too much for reaching your goals.

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## Redefining Fitness through an Active Lifestyle

What are the first things that come to mind when you think of what it takes to get fit?

### There is so Much More Than “Exercise”

A few years ago I would have said regular strength training, 5 days a week of cardio workouts and maybe taking a class for yoga or Pilates. Did you answer the same way? Many people do, and while these are all good answers, they can also be limiting. There is so much more to being fit and the summer months are a good time to explore other alternatives that complement the more common definition of fitness programs. By incorporating many different activities into your life you will expand your idea of fitness and boost your agility. You may also discover new found passions for activities that will keep you motivated to stay fit year round.

### What Activities are in Your Community?

Most people have access to rivers, lakes and state parks. These lend themselves to a wide array of activities from kayaking and canoeing, wind surfing and triathlons, hiking, biking, walking and running. There are a growing number of non-profit organizations, such as the Audubon and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, working to preserve and enhance our country's natural resources for activities so we can fully enjoy them.

Most communities are also rich in multiple forms of and options for dance, group fitness, Pilates, yoga, martial arts, kick boxing, boot camps, water aquatics, drumming, races and charity walks, as well as many other physical activities. And most towns have team sports available, from tennis to softball, and of course there is the option of golf.

If you want to do something outside the traditional fitness routines consider looking into some of these other options. They will add variety into your life, work your body in a new way, expand your capabilities and will likely also increase your confidence, mood and curiosity.

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### How Do You Feel About Getting Fit?

Just as important as expanding your idea of activities that keep you fit is the way you think and feel about fitness. Currently about 30% of the US population belongs to a gym, and of those about half use their membership regularly. While gyms serve an important function for achieving fitness, the majority of people aren't inspired to use them. Unfortunately most aren't inspired to get fit either, and one of the main reasons is the lack of understanding that fitness doesn't have to mean a reliance on the gym – it is just part of the equation when living an active lifestyle.

### Discover How Good it Feels to Move

Another unfortunate aspect of fitness is that most people look at it as a nuisance forced upon them and something they must do for fear of a worse consequence. Our bodies were meant to move, and when we get active we discover it really feels good. It feels even better when we are enjoying ourselves, developing new skills, looking at beautiful scenery and exploring our environment and ourselves. When fitness is relegated to the four walls of a gym, we lose the richness of what fitness is all about. It is about feeling great in our own skin, increasing our energy and stamina, feeling we can do anything and having freedom to be active well into our old age.

### What Activities would be Enjoyable to You?

Our inactivity as a society is robbing us of the joy of living, of relieving the pressures of our hectic daily routines and our health. If the gym isn't for you, or if you want to add some other things to your gym routine, consider this week what other activities would be interesting, stimulating and enjoyable.

Also consider a time in your life when you felt really good and physically able to do what ever you wanted to do. Do you want to regain or retain this? Do you want to enjoy an active lifestyle that enables you to travel, explore new things and fully participate in life for as long as you can? You can do this by adding fitness into your lifestyle through pleasurable activities in and outside of the gym.

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## Finding Aerobic Exercise You Like Indoors

Do you stop being active when it gets cold and dark?

### Not Everyone Likes to be Outdoors in the Winter

It is that time of year when doing exercise and aerobic activities outdoors loses its appeal for lots of people, and I am one of them. At the same time others are eagerly anticipating snow and all the fun things they have waited all year to do again.

For those of us that want to come inside – out of the cold for the winter, it can be a challenge to find fat-burning aerobic activities we like or to get enough variety in our exercise to get us through the long winter and early spring months.

The easy answer seems to be to join the gym, where there are lots of options and probably one or two things we like or are willing to do. The problem, however, for so many people who decide to join a gym in the winter, is they really don't like going or being at a gym or don't like working out on gym equipment. But they join anyway and try to go.

Eventually they give up on the whole idea. Is this you? Would you like to get some exercise but can't figure out how to do this in a way that seems enjoyable or that works best for you?

### What Activities Have You Like to Do in the Past?

The first thing to consider is what kinds of activities do you like to do that can get your heart rate into the aerobic zone. Think back to things you used to do that were fun. Many women have enjoyed dancing, jazzercise, skating, exercise videos, power yoga, roller blading, doing the hoola hoop, biking, hiking and rowing. Men often gravitate to sports like ice hockey, basketball and football. You can do nearly all of these during the winter. Some you can do at home and others at a facility.

### What Peaks Your Interest?

Lots of people also enjoy tennis, but this isn't usually aerobic enough as a regular form of exercise. But it can be a good way to add variety in with other aerobic activities. The goal is to do something that keeps you moving for an extended period at a moderately brisk pace at least three times a week. Do any of the ideas I listed above peak your

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interest? Can you come up with other things that you have enjoyed in the past that sound interesting and fun to do? I haven't mentioned skiing, hiking, snow shoeing, broomball or ice skating, because these are all outdoor activities, but they are also great aerobic activities.

#### Looking into New Types of Aerobic Activities

There are also some newer options that might work for you. One that is popular is called Rebounding, which is a fancy term for jumping around on an upscale mini trampoline. This is a great indoor activity that doesn't take up much room, isn't loud and doesn't cost too much. It is getting lots of attention because it is a weight-bearing exercise that builds bone density, is really easy and fun, and provides good aerobic exercise. If this sounds appealing, be aware that the cheaper mini trampolines are known to cause injuries and knee pain. I've experienced the knee pain first hand. The Rebounders have better springs to absorb the shock. You can find out more by searching on the Internet.

#### Consider Gym Equipment at Home if You Like It

You may also like home gym equipment. I happen to like my Stairmaster. There are a wide range of home equipment options. There are inexpensive treadmills, elliptical trainers, bikes, stair steppers and rowers on the market. You can also find used gym-quality equipment in the paper and at resellers. And of course you can get them new with a good service contract. I have been really pleased with the service centers for Stairmaster and Lifecycle. I called Lifecycle almost fifteen years after I bought my bike for a replacement part, and they still had my records on file and promptly sent the part. When I called Stairmaster for help with a bad motor, they sent a guy out within a day for a reasonable fee. That made the expense of buying them new worth it to me.

#### What Activities would be Enjoyable to You?

So this week, figure out what you really like to do and see what your options are. You might be surprised by how easy it is. You might even find you look forward to your activity and getting into a regular exercise groove that you only thought you could do outside.

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## Next Steps

Once you have had some time to reflect on what you have learned about yourself and your options, consider what steps you want to take next. Certainly this guide has given you a lot of things to think about and insights about how to move forward on your own. Be sure to take advantage of your new resolve and make one small step today to put yourself and your health first.

You may also want some specific guidance and hand-holding, and I encourage you to consider the additional guidance available to you.

## Additional Guidance

Articles and guidance on my blog

[www.aHealthyLifestyleWorks.com/blog](http://www.aHealthyLifestyleWorks.com/blog)

Inspired to Feel Good

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I wish you the best in feeling better and creating a healthier lifestyle that really feels good to you and fits your needs and interests. Remember to always listen to your body and your heart, instead of getting caught up in what others are promoting. You know yourself best, and you also know that quick fixes don't lead to long term results.



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