

How to live the fitness lifestyle

By Sam Benavides

How do I live the fitness lifestyle? What obstacles keep me from living it? Maybe a better question is, 'what is fitness?', 'And what am I fit for?'

First of all, I would submit to you that the reason to be fit is not to look good, but rather to be in good health. Because healthy is not about changing your physical appearance but changing your lifestyle; once you change your lifestyle to be healthy, your body will follow.

Sounds simple enough, right? Yet the most common excuse we hear from people who want to get fit but can't is: "I don't have time to exercise!" To me, this is code for: "I have too much on my plate and I don't know how to manage my time". Everyone has the exact same number of hours in a day – no more, no less – and there are plenty of people who find the time to exercise. So if you're one of those people who just doesn't have enough time, read on.

"So how can I better manage my time?" Although I could give you tips on time management and finding tools to get more done in less time, that is not the best answer. My best answer is this: SEEK WISDOM! This is really the only helpful answer because I'm not in your same situation and have no clue how important exercise is to be able to help you reprioritize your life (especially if you have kids or elderly living with you).

That being said, there is a right way to seek wisdom and a wrong way. The right way would be to ask yourself, 'How do I get wisdom?', 'Where do I find wisdom?', 'Who do I know that is wiser than me?' These questions should eventually lead you to the one true source of wisdom – God.

The wrong way to seek wisdom is to ask yourself, 'Why can't I learn to exercise more?' Or, 'Why am I not disciplined?' Or worse yet, 'Why am I such an idiot?' This may sound silly, but you'd be surprised how many people will say things like that. Although this is done in an effort to gain wisdom as to why they made the mistakes that led them to being so busy, these are not questions you should ask. For one, they don't give you the answer you need to help you reprioritize, and two, they rarely lead you to gaining wisdom.

The mind will answer whatever question you ask it, so if you're trying to problem solve some challenging situation, **you need to ask a better question**. The reason people don't have time to exercise is that most people in today's fast-paced culture have too many commitments. Our culture encourages this by getting us to believe we should be all things to all people, or that we need to be on our game 24/7, or that we are superior to other people in other less developed parts of the world and mistakes are not an option. This is simply FALSE! And these messages are devoid of any wisdom.

So what are some ways to lead me to or help me find wisdom? I'll share one my personal experiences of a way I found wisdom: I like to watch nature shows like those you see on the National Geographic channel. One show in particular I like to watch is the one where the lions are chasing zebras.



You know the scene, the lions begin to stalk the zebra. Soon they select the young or weaker zebra and begin their attack. If they're successful, they all dine on fresh zebra meat until there's nothing left. Later, you see them resting and sleeping.

The point of this is not for you to change your food shopping habits nor your diet, the point is that there is wisdom in the wilderness. Here are four lessons I learned from this fact of wild life.

1. **Prioritize:** The process of the lion watching the herd is to identify the target that will give them the greatest chance of success. In evaluating what things merit your commitment, you must prioritize – ask yourself, How important is this to me right now? What are the ramifications of abandoning or postponing this commitment? What’s the worst that can happen? What’s my purpose? Then make the wisest decision you know to make. If you’re unsure, ask a trusted friend or family for advice.
2. **Attack:** Once the lion begins the attack, she is focused on the single zebra and is not distracted by the rest of the herd or anything else for that matter – this is a very wise course of action. In contrast, imagine she is distracted by an elephant nearby and gives up the zebra chase for a much larger meal – this would be very unwise as it is above her prowess. Likewise, once you begin your attack on the task you know is within your limits of completing, stay on track. Use the S.M.A.R.T. principle in deciding which task to tackle, i.e. is it Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time sensitive?
3. **Re-group:** An interesting fact about lions is that they make one kill for every 5 attempts. So if the king of the jungle has a 20% success rate, why would we expect to do any better? The point of this is not to settle for 20% but rather, give yourself room for improvement if you don’t hit your target or reach your goal the first time out. In other words, if you don’t succeed at your commitment, don’t be so hard on yourself that you quit; have a Plan B. When the lions fail, they don’t quit, they re-group and try again!
4. **Rest:** After the lions complete their task of hunting and feeding, they rest. The lesson here is that resting and sleeping is a necessary component to enjoying your efforts in managing your time wisely - resting allows you to reflect on your effort. Take a Sabbath rest and get 8 hours of sleep per night.

In summary, in order to gain wisdom, we need to step outside ourselves and our current predicament to gain a fresh perspective on the situation. For some of you, it may be going directly to the source and praying to God. For others, it may mean finding problem-solving application from an unlikely source like NatGeo, or like from a friend’s personal life experience, or from a good book or movie.

John Marks Templeton puts it this way: “Often a successful problem-solver is one who creates a new context in which to view the problem. This can often be done by directing one’s attention away from the distracting details of the difficulty.” The lesson here is that when striving to make better health choices, i.e. eat better, exercise more and manage your stress, take a break & seek wisdom. Then commit to it!

Finally, the biggest and most difficult challenge in keeping the fitness lifestyle is in finding a positive and encouraging support group – a family into which to belong. Lions have it in nature, it’s called a Pride. For people, however, support doesn’t always come naturally; relationships break down and change throughout our life. Even if you have a loving relationship with family or a spouse, they may not necessarily support your decision to live a fitness lifestyle. This doesn’t mean you made a bad choice, it just means they’re not ready.

So the best way we believe to find such a group of people is to create it for yourself. If your old friends don’t support you, find some new friends, better yet, BE the new friend! That is, go and teach it to those who will listen. Don’t beat people over the head with your new lifestyle, love them and accept them FIRST, then teach.

In effect, LEAD BY EXAMPLE, i.e. be teachable, then share what you’ve learned with others.