

Fitting in Fitness for Telecommuters

by Grace T. DeSimone, B.A.

It is 3 P.M. and you are in your pajamas pecking away at your keyboard, when you realize you have not brushed your teeth or even looked in a mirror. Yup, you are a telecommuter. Telecommuting (AKA working from home) is becoming common place as more companies embrace the trend. Whether you are a full-time telecommuter or an occasional "working-from-home-today" employee, here are some strategies to keep you as mobile as your work space.

- **Use your commute time for fitness.** Use the time you would normally commute and go for a walk, do some exercises, or head to the gym.
- **Take 10 minutes — or less.** Fitting in fitness was never easier. There is an app for everything including "the seven-minute workout," designed to work your body head to toe, including strengthening exercises of all the major muscle groups done in rapid succession with 10 seconds of rest between exercises.
- **Schedule movement meetings.** You schedule everything else. Why not book a short exercise meeting? Invite other telecommuters to join you and challenge each other to keep moving.
- **Wear it.** Wearable devices are a perfect medium for telecommuters. Track steps, activity time, standing time, stairs climbed, or miles moved. Join a challenge community and stay ahead of your teammates.
- **Get up every hour.** Research shows that too much sitting leads to a foggy brain, a stiff body, and sluggish metabolism. Every hour, try to stand up and move around. You can do things at home you would never do at the office, so jog in place, dance, or play with your pet.
- **Be Hands free.** Invest in a hands-free headset to avoid "phone neck" and to increase your ability to be mobile. Grab your phone and move around. If you cannot get up and walk, move your arms and legs.
- **Move when you can.** There are many opportunities for you to get up from your chair and move about your space. If you are on a phone conference and you do not need to reference your computer, get up and pace around while you are talking. You will be surprised how many steps you will take.
- **Brainstorm and Balance.** While you are working to create the next big thing, try standing on one foot or walking backward to improve balance. You may spark a new creative thought, too.
- **Breathe.** Breathing is the most underrated activity we take for granted. Focusing on your breath has numerous benefits. Try inhaling while counting to 4, then exhaling to a count of 4. Now, inhale to a count of 5 and exhale to a count a 5. Work your way up to a count of 7 or 8. You will destress, reset, and feel refreshed.
- **Take a Stand.** Try standing instead of sitting. You will want to take several factors into consideration before launching into a stand-up work environment. Your desk, computer screen, and keyboard should be situated in a position that is ergonomically sound for your body. Many companies offer ergonomic solutions for telecommuters. Be aware that more is not better. Standing all day can place stress on back, knees, and feet. Combining sitting with standing seems to be the best option.

- **Stretching Solutions.** When you work with a computer or mobile device, you will likely find your neck, shoulders, upper back, and hips tighten up after prolonged periods of use. To stretch these tight areas, think of the positions you work in and stretch in the opposite direction. For example, stand up and lean back to extend your spine; clasp your hands behind your back and squeeze your shoulder blades together to stretch the front of your shoulders; extend your arms overhead into a V position and press your arms back to open your chest.

Telecommuting is a unique working experience that requires a little bit of discipline to reap its benefits. Manage your time to include physical activity and you will be stronger in mind, body, and soul. Enjoy!

As the national group fitness director for Optum, Grace T DeSimone, BA., and her group fitness teams manage group exercise classes in worksite wellness programs across the country. She serves on the executive council of ACSM's Committee on Certification and Registry Boards. She also is the editor for ACSM's Resource Manual for Group Exercise Instructors (2011) and is the 2016 IDEA Health & Fitness Association Program Director of the Year. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Dance from Hunter College, City University of New York, in New York, NY and is certified by ACSM as a group exercise instructor and personal trainer.

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