



THE FOUNDATION OF REACHING YOUR FITNESS GOALS

Everyone knows that good diet and exercise are essential in maintaining good health. The problem that most of us face is how to find a workout that works for us and our lifestyle. What can you do to make sure you're taking the right steps to reach your fitness goal?

Your first step to attaining better health is setting a goal.

Before you literally jump in with both feet, it's important to set goals. No one can achieve success when the target is always moving! Whether you find it hard to make it to the gym regularly or are working towards your ideal body shape, understanding your end goal will help you decide what steps you should take.

We've been helping people feel better, lose weight, and relieve stress for years through workouts, group classes, and strength training. We've found that there are three main fitness goals that our members want to achieve.

In this easy guide, we've outlined these three goals and what it takes to get started.

GOAL 1

WORK OUT CONSISTENTLY

Is your goal to work out regularly? After all, regular exercise can improve your mood, lower your risk for health conditions, help you sleep better, and simply make you feel better! Sticking to a workout routine sounds easy, but this can be a very difficult goal to maintain long term. For example, have you ever hit snooze instead of hitting the gym? Have you ever been “too tired” to exercise after work? We’ve all been there!

So, how can you find the inspiration to stay true to your goal of working out consistently?

DETERMINE WHAT “WORKING OUT CONSISTENTLY” MEANS FOR YOU

It's easy to say, “I'm going to work out seven days a week!” And, you might even stick to this for a week or two. But, setting an unrealistic goal is the easiest way to set your goal to the side. Instead of

setting a crazy goal, set a goal that you can realistically accomplish and measure. This might be hitting the gym four times a week, attending group **fitness classes** three times a week, or spending

30 minutes on the treadmill on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. **Whatever your goal, you will be more likely to exercise consistently if it's realistic for your health, schedule, and lifestyle.**

FIND A WORKOUT PARTNER

Skipping your workout or cutting it short is easy when you're the only one keeping yourself accountable. Stay motivated by joining a **group fitness class** or scheduling a sweat session

with your friends. The more comfortable you are at the gym, the more often you're likely to come. **Studies** show you are more likely to go to the gym and enjoy your workout if it's done in

a group or social setting. By building a social interaction into your workout, you've made the gym a place you can hang out with your friends and get your daily pump of endorphins.

REWARD YOURSELF

For those who enjoy working out, finding the motivation to go to the gym is easy. For those who are a little less enthusiastic, it's hard to stay motivated for your fitness goal. A simple way to combat

low motivation is to reward yourself! Rewards can be as small as treating yourself to your favorite smoothie or bingeing a few episodes of your favorite show post-workout. **Motivating yourself**

with rewards can inspire a habit. Once you're in the habit of going to the gym, you won't need as much inspiration to get your workout in.

CHOOSE WORKOUTS YOU ENJOY

Losing the motivation to go to the gym is easy when your workouts feel like something you have to do, not something you like to do. Turn your workout into an activity you love. Make it fun! What do you

enjoy doing outside of the gym? Can you turn those activities into a workout? If you catch yourself dancing along to your music as you work, try a **zumba** class! You can dance your calories off to high energy music.

Competitive spirits may want to be challenged with **high intensity** movements and **sweat heavy workouts**. Find what makes you happy and work it into your workout.

DOCUMENT YOUR PROGRESS

Waiting to see your progress show can get discouraging. You've worked hard and sweat for hours, so why aren't the numbers showing? Not all progress is immediate! Keep yourself motivated by

tracking your food intake and your workout sessions. Monitoring the small changes you see in your **fitness log** can keep you motivated when the numbers on the scale get you down.

Write motivational quotes and goals in your log along the way. Progress can be slow, so find quick, easy inspirations along the way!



GOAL 2

LOSE WEIGHT

Is your goal to lose weight? It's easy to fall into fad diets and trendy workouts, but they're almost always unsustainable. How can you lose the weight and make sure it stays off? Staying on top of your diet and exercise seems easy at first, but temptation is everywhere. For example, how many times have you grabbed your favorite candy bar at check out? Have you ever said you were going to the gym after work, then decided you were "too tired"? It happens to everyone!

So, how can you stay motivated to lose weight and work towards your goal?

DON'T SKIP BREAKFAST

Mom was right! Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. By eating a full, nutritious breakfast, you kick start your metabolism and **stave off cravings for junk food** later in the day.

Your breakfast should consist of about **400 - 500 calories** packed with lean proteins and fiber to keep you fuller longer. Fill your plate with eggs, fruits, veggies, unsweetened Greek

yogurt, nuts, or 100% whole grains to keep you fueled throughout the day. Who would've thought adding a meal to your day could help you lose weight?

FOCUS ON HIGH-INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING (HIIT)

Some of us aren't meant to be distance runners. Imagining running for miles and miles isn't what you had in mind when you started working on your weight loss goal. HIIT workouts are the perfect solution for those

who find running repulsive or don't have time to run miles upon miles. These short, high-intensity cardio workouts are a quick, 30- to 40-minute way to burn away calories without having to step foot on a treadmill.

Cycling classes, like **SPRINT**, are a perfect example of high-intensity workouts. The best part about HIIT workouts are you keep burning calories 24 hours AFTER your workout is over!

TAKE TIME TO RELAX

Stress weight is real, and yes, it's unfair. Taking the time to destress is essential to maintaining good mental and physical health. Our bodies produce a chemical compound called **cortisol**.

It's released when we feel stress, and it makes our body go haywire. Cortisol can make you feel hungrier, crave junk food, and increase your belly fat. Worst of all, it can also cause your body to

burn fewer calories. Keep your cortisol in check by taking the time to unwind at the end of each day. If you're feeling particularly stressed, try a **yoga class**.

DON'T OVER RESTRICT YOUR DIET

It's hard to stick to a strict diet. You're constantly tempted by junk food and treats littering every aisle of the store. Instead of punishing yourself with foods you don't enjoy, find a way to make your favorite foods healthy.

Pizza is a great example! Stick with your favorite pepperoni pizza, but this time, add banana peppers or mushrooms. Banana peppers have a compound called **capsaicin** that will activate your metabolism and help you burn calories!

Limiting your diet too strictly can lead you to indulge in binges of junk food. Relax your diet and let yourself have a sweet every once in a while to avoid those big binges.

FUN FACT!

Capsaicin can be found in all chili peppers, not just banana peppers.

SQUEEZE IN A LUNCHTIME WORKOUT

Do you feel like your work days drag on? Is it getting harder to stay awake in your late afternoon meetings? Break up the tedium of work and feel re-energized

with a quick workout! Try a quick **lunchtime workout**. If you don't have time for a full workout, why not go for a walk? A quick walk will get your heart rate elevated

after spending hours sitting at your desk. Ask your coworkers to join you! Make it a time to relax and take a breath of fresh air in your work day.

GOAL 3

GAIN STRENGTH

Is your goal to be stronger? We've all been intimidated by the weight area at the gym and have felt a little unsure of what to. Don't let that uneasiness stop you! Not all strength training requires weights. Building your strength should always begin with your body weight. Take your strength training slow and focus on your technique!

So, how do you start your strength journey and work toward your goal?

WARM UP YOUR MUSCLES

Make sure you fully warm up your muscles—break into a little sweat—before you start your workout. Warm-ups should be dynamic! Skip the treadmill or elliptical; instead, try box jumps or

lunges. These movements will get your heart rate up and loosen your joints. If you're focusing your workout on specific body parts, make sure to fully warm up those muscles before you lift.

For legs and glutes, try box jumps or glute raises. For chest, back, and arms, find a band and do pull aparts. Your muscles will thank you later!

START WITH YOUR WEIGHT

Starting your goal to get stronger can be intimidating. The weight racks are unfamiliar and the dumbbells are strange. Don't worry about them yet. Your own body weight is the only thing you need!

Box jumps, wall sits, air squats, lunges, push ups, and pull-ups are a great place to start. These movements will give you a good, well-rounded base to start your journey!

If you aren't sure which movements to try or the correct technique, ask about a **personal trainer** or **join a class** that uses **plyometric movements**.

WORK ON YOUR WEAKNESSES

It's not all about the weights. Getting stronger takes more work than picking up increasingly heavier weights. To make sure you have an all-around healthy balance of strength, you need to work on movements you

aren't necessarily good at. Accessory work is essential! Struggling with squats? Work lunges, wall sits, and glute raises into your workout. If pull-ups are difficult, try planks, rows, and simply hanging from the pull-up bar.

Don't be discouraged by struggling with specific movements. Building strength takes time! Adapt your workouts to what you can do, and work your way to where you want to be.

WATCH YOUR FORM

You've heard the saying: Never lift with your back. Let's be honest though; how many of us do just that without thinking about it? Making sure you're lifting objects correctly in

your everyday life is just as important as making sure you're lifting objects correctly in your workout. If you lift something wrong, you're running the risk of pulling a muscle, or worse,

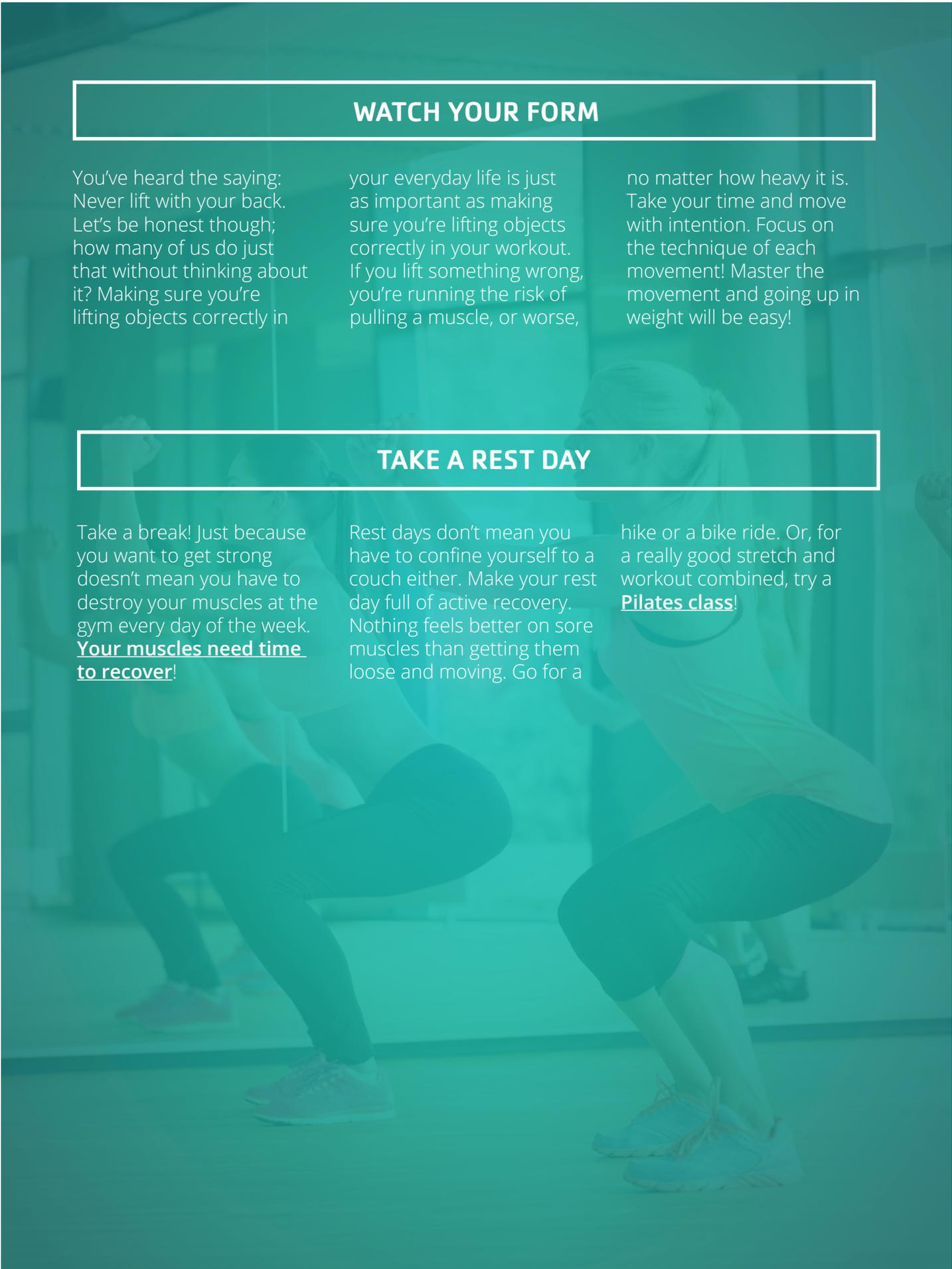
no matter how heavy it is. Take your time and move with intention. Focus on the technique of each movement! Master the movement and going up in weight will be easy!

TAKE A REST DAY

Take a break! Just because you want to get strong doesn't mean you have to destroy your muscles at the gym every day of the week. **Your muscles need time to recover!**

Rest days don't mean you have to confine yourself to a couch either. Make your rest day full of active recovery. Nothing feels better on sore muscles than getting them loose and moving. Go for a

hike or a bike ride. Or, for a really good stretch and workout combined, try a **Pilates class!**





**Exercise is essential for a healthy lifestyle,
so understanding what motivates you to get
to the gym can be your key to success!**

Become a member, join a group fitness class, hit the treadmill, and get ready to make your workouts fun again. No matter what your fitness goals are, the YMCA can help you achieve it!

BECOME A LAFAYETTE FAMILY YMCA MEMBER