

## Peer Perspective March 2020



I've always felt intimidated by the concept of exercise. I've never been much of an athlete and growing up, like many other kids, I had a lot of negative experiences around exercise and physical education. There have been times in my life that I have gotten gym memberships and gotten into biking and walking but working out was always a chore; I never enjoyed exercising and at times it was a miserable experience. I wanted to feel stronger and more fit and I wanted to feel the health and wellness benefits of working out but I simply didn't like doing it.

I have always loved spending time outside and for a long time I had been wanting to go hiking but when it came down to actually doing it, I would get so anxious that for years I never went. I bought hiking boots 3 years before I ever used them! I had lots of ideas in my head of what hiking was and I didn't think I was in shape enough or knowledgeable enough to do it.

Within the last year, I made the decision to just start trying things that I want to do without judging myself. Instead of worrying about hiking up a mountain, I told myself I was going to just wander around in the woods. Soon I was spending quality time hiking (same as wandering!) and not only was I spending time outside, I was exercising and actually enjoying it! As soon as I stopped focusing on the "workout" and started just doing what felt good (like stopping to look at an interesting plant or slowing down to take in my surroundings), this form of exercise became something I do regularly and look forward to.

Exercise doesn't have to be running for miles or lifting weights at a gym; exercise is anything that gets your body moving. The possibilities are nearly endless and there's likely a way you can get moving that you would enjoy. I strongly encourage everyone to try setting aside your self-judgments and anxieties if there's an activity that you'd like to try that intimidates you. Not only might you find a hobby you really enjoy, you can also build your self-confidence while you experience the mental and physical benefits of exercise.

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