

## On Building a Healthy Relationship to the Gym

Like any other relationship, the way you relate to the gym is a reflection of your self-concept. The thought of the gym, or physical exercise in general, can spark anxiety, avoidance, and the general *ick*. This is often rooted in insecurity, or what Planet Fitness describes as “Gymtimidation,” the fear of working out in front of others who may appear more advanced or more fit than you.

Though sweaty, burly men pumping iron, grunting, slinging gallon jugs, dropping their weights and shaking the floors can cause undue gymtimidation, it is entirely possible for everyone to reclaim the gym as their safe haven. And there’s something beautiful about choosing to coexist with the *selfie*-obsessed meatheads, isn’t there? Beauty and the Beast, a tale as old as time... Even the most skittish and insecure beginner can build a secure relationship to the gym with some persistence and support. Working with a personal trainer is one of the best ways to build that confidence.

Are you a gym goer who puts in headphones and escapes within? If it comes from a sincere intention to dedicate gym time to thinking (or not thinking), that’s lovely. If the tuning out is rooted in social anxiety, however, it may help to keep ears open and talk to fellow members. After learning skills and having a plan, the best way to overcome gymtimidation is building community. Imagine getting a high five or a genuine smile from a once-stranger at the gym who makes you feel seen. Imagine being that presence for someone else! Awesome...

Do you, despite your better sense, let your distaste for the gym justify your lack of exercise as a whole? You *know* a workout would do you some good, but you find it brutal to force anything. There’s nothing wrong with you. You just haven’t learned how to move in ways that bring you joy yet. On the other end of the spectrum are gym sharks who never stop moving until injury or disease make them. Both the underuse and overuse of the body are self-destructive. Chances are, if you’re human, you are making choices that defy the inner wisdom beckoning you toward true health. This is where coaching can intervene and get you back on track.

Why not claim one hour a day for yourself? A *power hour* per day is achievable to almost anyone. These can be the happiest and most connected moments; increased dopamine and endorphins flow along with improved concentration and productivity! When the body moves, it provides a grounding distraction for the chatter of the mind. That’s part of why gentle to mildly vigorous exercise, at least 30 minutes a day, is recommended for anxiety and depression treatment.

Regular movement allows us to enter a flow state in which heightened clarity and creativity are achievable. It’s an opportunity to zoom out and evaluate one’s position with neutrality, as in meditation. Sometimes, exercise opens our eyes to truths we don’t like to acknowledge. If you don’t reclaim even one hour a day to work these things out, what message does that send to your mind, body, and spirit — to yourself, the only relationship you are responsible for from birth to death.

There is not a single downside to observing your life. There is not a single downside to being strong and flexible. There is not a single downside to building resilience by being disciplined. Reinforce your habits with compassion and curiosity rather than shame, and the whole game changes. Start today. Future you will thank you.

Thanks for reading!  
Coach Kodiak

Let me know your reflections and requests! Here are the seeds of my next article...

When I see an athlete who is clearly dedicated to their fitness, the least interesting thing about them is their body. It's the mindset that intrigues me. Where does healthy motivation come from, and how can we create more?

For those who struggle with consistency, it's important to affirm that *it's okay* that every day isn't your best workout of the year. Motivation comes and goes. You create inertia by moving forward anyway.

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