

Time for spring renewal - recharge your mind, body and spirit



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By Karen Kansler, R.N.

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After the long, cold winter we've had, it's about time for a spring renewal. After months of indulging on sweets during the holidays or spending more hours on the couch watching reruns than we'd like to admit, it's about time to wake our bodies up and give ourselves a fresh start.

The awakening I'm talking about is not just for the health enthusiasts who wake up every day looking forward to their five-mile run. God bless them, but that's not who I'm after here. I want to tell everybody - from those who are sedentary, have limited mobility or just a lack of motivation - that a fresh start is on the horizon.

Since it's finally spring, everything has a chance to become new again, including you. I'm going to show you how to re-charge your body, mind and spirit.

Begin with the body

Giving your body a jump start with exercise is a great way to begin a wellness routine. All you have to do is move. For anyone who's just getting started with an exercise routine, start low and go slow. At the very least, start with five minutes and increase the time and intensity of your workout. Pace yourself and go steadily.

I suggest 30 minutes for four days a week, but just starting out, you can break down the time into smaller increments. Take a brisk walk, workout to DVD programs, ride your bike, do strength training with resistance bands, or, for those with limited abilities or who haven't exercised in a long while, do aquatic exercises, tai chi or gentle yoga. I even teach tai chi at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital - it's wonderful and not too strenuous or physically taxing.

Being active also reduces stress, improves your breathing and your heart, and strengthens your bones, preventing osteoporosis and arthritis. It's essential for wiping out disease and building up your body's natural defenses. We've had a nasty winter, so the first chance you get to enjoy the sunshine of spring, get outside, grab a workout buddy, and get moving. It can save your life!

Relieve your mind and feed your spirit

The body, mind and spirit are all connected, so while you work on one part, you

should improve the others too. Being healthy includes improving your overall wellbeing. This includes not having any stress, building good relationships and being content with your life. When you're stressed, there's a physiological process that occurs which breaks down your immunity and causes disease. Overcome stress with meditation, breathing exercises, physical activity, practicing a talent, taking up a hobby or spending time family and friends.

Get in touch with your faith, pray, and take a little quiet time to commune with God.

Tips for your own spring renewal

- Be kind to yourself! Show yourself love every day by eating healthfully, getting adequate sleep, and being physically active.
- Don't let setbacks derail you - get back into wellness as soon as possible. We're all human. Sometimes we indulge in decadent foods or get lazy. Get back up, start fresh and stay healthy.
- Feed your spirit by finding your passion and whatever feeds your soul. Helping others, volunteering, traveling, and learning new things are a few examples. Stay social with those you love - sometimes you've got to give love to get love.
- Keep learning alive. Life-long learning is important to improving your mental and physical wellbeing.
- Make it a point to do something active everyday. Go for a walk, take a hike, go golfing, anything to get you up, out, and moving. Don't forget to mix it up. Doing the same thing every day can become boring, so move your body, get creative and have fun.

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