



Exercise Outside the Box

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By Kenya McCullum

Regular exercise can keep us fit and healthy. But let's face it, after doing the same routines day in and day out, it's hard to stay motivated. Traditional workouts, like hopping on the "dreadmill," quickly become a bore, no matter how much your body benefits from it. And if you're bored with your workout, eventually you'll quit. Here are some ideas to pull you out of that rut, keep your workouts fresh, and get

you back on track.

Archery

At first glance, you might not think there is much to archery, but if you give it a shot, you will find a workout with a bow and arrow can be quite rewarding. Holding and carrying a bow and arrow that can weigh between 6 and 9 pounds is a great way to enhance upper-body strength. And because of the amount of stability that you need to shoot a bow, archery also engages your core and leg muscles.

In addition, archery can sharpen your mental focus, thanks to the amount of concentration required to hit a target. Archers generally walk around courses from one target to the next, so you'll work on your stamina, too.

Fencing

Fencing enthusiasts consider the sport to be "chess at 1,000 mph." And it's no wonder — you're rushing at your opponent with a sword while defending yourself from your opponent's maneuvers, demanding mental and physical effort. The workout pace is great for increasing your heart rate and toning your arms, thighs, and bottom. But don't let this workout intimidate you: You don't have to be a star athlete to learn fencing and excel at it. This exercise is good for people of all shapes, ages, and abilities.

"I started fencing at 48 years old, which in itself is amazing that I was able to successfully start a sport at a later stage in my life, and at the time I weighed 200 pounds," says Kathryn Schifferle, chair of the Resource Development Committee at the U.S.

Fencing Association. "Fencing is very rigorous, like boxing, but because it engaged my mind, I didn't even notice. Within five years, I lost 70 pounds and made the U.S. Veteran Women's Foil team and competed in France at the World Championship."

Krav Maga

Krav Maga is a unique workout that can keep you fit both and safe. As a hand-to-hand combat technique used by the Israeli Defense Forces — as well as U.S. law enforcement and military personnel — Krav Maga helps practitioners defend themselves using their natural body reflexes, with less emphasis on strength or athletic ability.

As an exercise, Krav Maga is an intense workout that increases cardiovascular and muscle activity through a series of drills where people simulate attacks with a partner. These fast-paced training exercises include combative techniques like punching, kicking, kneeing, and elbowing. A Krav Maga workout is not repetitive, and you can expect to be kept on your toes by instructors who will vary the exercises from class to class. In some weeks, classes might focus on aerobic aspects of the workout, while other times they might rely on training scenarios. The result is a workout that can help you inside and outside of the gym.

Paintball

Paintball combines physical exercise with strategy and communication skills. As you jog around a paintball field and shoot your opponents, you must work well with your team members to get the most from this workout. Though strategy is an integral part of paintball, it will not take you long to get the hang of it.

“Paintball has the advantage of being extremely easy to get started in. Pretty much anyone can receive a safety briefing, borrow or rent equipment, and have fun the first time they play,” says Chris Raehl, president of the National Collegiate Paintball Association. “Paintball also allows people of all shapes, sizes, and fitness levels to compete in an athletic activity on a roughly even playing field. Advantages in height, weight, and fitness are minor when compared to communication, field awareness, and teamwork.”

Pole dancing

If you think pole dancing is confined to seedy adult clubs, think again. This sexy and misunderstood workout is gaining popularity because it can increase your physical fitness level — and your confidence. Physically, pole dancing is a total-body workout that burns fat, increases flexibility and strength, and improves the cardiovascular system. Mentally, studies show pole dancing actually can challenge your brain and strengthen neural connections. And emotionally, pole dancing can make you happy. This workout causes your body to release serotonin and endorphins, which can give you a feeling of well-being and help you relax.

Though pole dancing shares many of the benefits of more traditional workouts, it's never boring and will challenge your body and mind.

“Pole dancing is a workout that doesn't feel like a workout, and you will use every muscle in your body without even knowing it. It requires a lot of technique, like trying to figure out how to transfer your weight on and off a pole and deciding when to use your upper or lower body,” says Anna Grundstrom, cofounder of the U.S. Pole Dance Federation. “This is a great way for women to reshape their bodies and build muscle mass. Why do push-ups and sit-ups when you can dance around on a pole and have fun [and achieve] the same results?”

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