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Could Working Out Be Bad For You?

Mitzvah Instructor Toshie Okabe explains why frequent movement is better than your workout.

It's 5 o'clock. You've been sitting all day. The best thing you could do is hit the gym and work up a good sweat.

Or is it?

Toshie Okabe doesn't think so. A longtime practitioner and instructor of the Mitzvah Technique, Toshie believes one of the keys to a healthy you lies in understanding and respecting your body.



Mitzvah Instructor Toshie Okabe maintains that people with poor posture or alignment problems (like the one in the diagram to the right) can easily become injured from working out.

“People don’t know that sitting creates tension. So does exercise. If you work out like most people, you’re emphasizing tension rather than

releasing it. You should focus on creating less tension, and also on releasing it. If you sit all day, make time to relax and break up muscle tension,” says Toshie.

To achieve this, she recommends you get up from your chair as often as possible. She also recommends you develop proper posture. (Slouching is bad for digestion, makes you constipated, decreases your intake of oxygen, and makes it difficult for you to work out, if not downright dangerous, adds Toshie.)

“Having proper posture and moving properly and frequently will be enough for the vast majority of people,” she says.

She alludes to a sedentary office worker in his 40s or 50s: “For that person, going to the gym isn’t necessarily a good idea, especially if they have the mindset that they have to do the same thing for 45 minutes, like going on a treadmill. That’s because repetition builds up tension.”

“It’s far better an approach to move more often throughout the day than to limit yourself to a period in the gym where you do the same thing day in and day out, then go back to being sedentary.”

Sound far-fetched? Consider the health habits of inhabitants of the [Blue Zones](#), widely acknowledged as the world’s healthiest regions. These include getting regular, habitual physical activity like gardening, walking, hiking, and completing chores.

In a nutshell, the less active you are in your daily life, the more frequent and less intense your exercise should be. The opposite holds true—only people who are very active have developed the foundation they need for them to handle intense bouts of exercise, according to Toshie.

This doesn’t necessarily mean you have to forsake your workouts. Younger people, in particular, are more likely to benefit from going to the gym. (Toshie recommends they consider indoor rock climbing or step exercises.)

“In general, yes, you can go to the gym, but you don’t need to set of

goal of doing, say, 45 minutes of hard work. That's not the point. You need to increase muscle elasticity. That's what being fit is all about. And that means walking, squatting, lots of stretching, some stationary bike... You should feel good at the end, not stiff or rigid."

Either way, you don't want to force your muscles into a workout they're not ready for, so make it a point to warm up properly. It's also important to give yourself enough downtime. Far from being a waste of time or a symptom of weakness, downtime can play a crucial role in reducing tension. As an example, Toshie recommends hot baths and massages.

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