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perfect fit

Make time for a little exercise everyday and you will feel healthy

CITY life isn't easy. It's hard prioritizing. It's tough making the time to 'fit' everything into a day. We are so many people all in one—from managing a career, being a parent, a spouse, a son/daughter, a housewife, etc. This list is unending and ever-expanding! There's never enough of you to go around, and it sometimes seems as though everyone you're trying so hard to please, is dissatisfied!

Time being of the essence, even if you're motivated, when it comes to prioritizing things, you'll always have a good excuse to skip a workout. You'll remain perpetually busy working, catching up on your reading, surfing the net, helping your child with homework, cooking, shopping, meeting up with a friend, or even just sleeping late.

You will never find time for anything. If you want time, you'll have to make it. The answer to your list of obstacles is always the same. Manage time better. Exercise during your lunch hour, while watching television, use the time when your kid is at play, at school, or stop off at class on your way home from work. Much can be done in these little shreds and patches of time which every day produces, and which most people throw away. Short as life is, we make it still shorter by this careless waste of time.

Where there's a will, there's always a way!

Here are some simple and highly effective exercises you can do even while sitting at your desk in the office.

Quick Desk Fixes

For the upper body (arms, chest and back)

While sitting at your desk, get your palms to meet at chest level. With your elbows bent and close by your side, squeeze your palms together while exhaling, and release them slightly while inhaling.

Extend your arms out by your side at shoulder level. Keeping the elbows slightly bent throughout, move the whole arm up and down in the same position. Don't cover more than half to three quarters of an inch.

For the legs

While sitting at your desk, straighten one leg out. In this position, pulse up and down a quarter to half an inch. Breathe normally and don't let the upper body rock while doing this. Keep the rest of your body steady.

In the above position, move the leg 3-4" from side to side, instead of up and down. This involves the inner and outer thigh muscles.

While standing, using your chair for support, rise up onto your toes, and then lower yourself, but keep both heels slightly off the floor. Exhale while lifting up, and inhale while lowering. Here, the calf muscles are being targeted.

For the Abs-

While sitting on the edge of your chair, keep both legs bent and apart from one another. Lean back all the way, just short of touching the chair. Make sure the spine is slightly rounded over and your chin is a bit lowered, close to the chest. Remain frozen in this reclined position for a slow count of 10, before sitting upright to relax for a few moments. Make sure you don't hold your breath at any time during this exercise. Breathe normally right through. Leaving the arms extended out by your side and parallel to the floor is the easiest option. As you get stronger and can take on more, bring the fists to your forehead, elbows bent and close together in front of you. To make the exercise even tougher, extend both arms straight up overhead.

This works the main abdominal muscle, the rec-

Find time, feel good

tus abdominus, which is also nicknamed the 'six pack', as well-trained abs resemble a six pack of beer. Sounds appealing, hmm?

To include the below belly abdominal group, get into the previously described position, and then get your right ankle up upon your left knee. Hold this position for a slow count of 10.

You can switch legs at a later stage. This targets both the main abdominal muscle (rectus abdominus) and the transverse abdominus which sits in the pelvic cavity.

The above abdominal exercises are not appropriate for those with a high BP problem.

Begin by doing 8-10 counts of all the above exercises, in sets of 2 or 3 each. As you get stronger and more capable, you can slowly increase the counts or reps, and even the sets at a later stage. It's always important to overload gradually, once the body has adapted and is relatively comfortable with the given activity.

Remember that correct breathing patterns are crucial. Always exhale during the contraction, or the most difficult stage of the exercise, and inhale during the relaxation phase, or the easiest part of the exercise.

Focus on correct technique and form throughout. It doesn't matter how much you can or can't do, but how you do it is vital. Concentrate on each exercise and visualize the body part that you are working. It's often more a mind-thing than a body-thing.

Do this 3-4 times a week, and you'll see results in less than 3 weeks time. You'll realise soon enough that you don't have to spend hours sweating it out in the gym, jogging in the park or participating in fitness classes. You can have it all without even leaving your office, and by spending as little as 6-8 minutes each day!

It doesn't get better than this!

For the best results, combine this with a sensible diet, which limits caloric intake without depriving yourself of the essential nutrients and energy that your body needs.

I've found the following pointers to be of tremendous value to my clientele.

- Eat out of a smaller plate. You'll tend to feel you're eating more than you really are!

- Did you know that it takes your brain 20 minutes to realise that your stomach is full? So, if you eat slowly, putting your fork down after each bite, you'll feel full after having eaten less food!

- Go for the carbs! It's a common myth that carbohydrates such as rice, potatoes and bread are fattening and therefore should be avoided. 58% of our daily food intake should be in the form of carbohydrates. That's a high percentage. They provide energy; they aren't fattening! However, watch what you're doing to them or putting on them. That may be fattening! For instance, if it's a baked jacket potato with butter and sour cream, then that's fattening. If your sandwich is loaded with butter or mayonnaise, then again, you've got a problem. If oil or ghee has been used in your rice preparation, that spells trouble!

- Remove the skin from chicken and fish before cooking. They contain a high level of fat.

- Avoid fried foods. Use alternative cooking methods such as baking, grilling, boiling and steaming instead.

- Go easy on cakes, chocolates, salad dressing, whipped cream and Indian sweets.

- Did you know that by cutting down on fats but increasing your carbohydrate intake, you can eat more without increasing your caloric intake? This is because 1 gram of fat contains 9 calories, whereas 1 gram of carbohydrates contains only 4 calories!

- Cut down on meats. Most of us eat 2-3 times more protein than our bodies actually require. Excess protein in the body is converted into fat.

- Consider this. When hungry, we're often actually only thirsty! A glass of fruit juice or lime water will hit the spot very satisfactorily.

- Cut down on aerated drinks, and go easy on the alcohol. These are high on calories.

- Eat to the extent where you're satisfied, but not stuffed. Most of us have the tendency to overeat without even realising it!

Of course, changing old habits isn't easy. Be patient, but above all, be honest with yourself.

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the alternative

Positive energy

Vastu Shastra is an effective shield against unknown forces

VASTU Shastra has begun to enjoy popular revival these days. But, everyone talks about it without quite knowing all the facts and details. It is an age old Indian science. More than 200 books have been published in the market, leaving the common man more confused than ever before!

Vastu Shastra can be defined as the 'art of living' in the right direction with the right energies for health. Vastu helps channel the cosmic energies of the sun, air and water, and can change direction of things and actions to correct the improper flow of energies. Indian architecture and building activities date back to the 3rd century AD and have withstood the test of time. They have adhered to certain principles that are comparable, assuming particular forms and respecting certain geographical directions.

Vastu Shastra probably came into being when sages observed that people living or working in certain structures, that were in harmony with their surroundings, were luckier and happier than others. It is believed that the location of bedrooms, drawing rooms, kitchen, staircases, toilets, etc. in houses and office buildings have a direct influence on the health and prosperity of the people inhabiting them.

There exists an amicable relationship between the five elements (earth, fire, water, metal, space) in human beings and the elements used for the houses inhabited by them. Also, the sun, the planets and the earth's magnetic field play a vital role in the sustenance of life on earth, and thus have a direct effect on the inhabitants. Radiation from the earth also has an important effect.

This is why children cannot sleep in certain houses or beds, as radiation affects them. Similarly, patients might not heal in certain hospital areas, some stretches of road/sea/air, could be more prone to accidents, etc. As adults, we lose out sensitivities to subtle energies. Not so with children and animals! Dogs sleep in positive radiation spots while cats sleep in negative radiation spots! Hence people should not sleep or sit in places where cats sleep as in the long run, the result is poor mental and physical health!

Poor Vastu affects health, as radiation can cause arthritis, cancers, ulcers, etc. It also affects financial fortunes, luck, human relationships, mental efficiency, stress levels and general well-being.

Effective application of Vastu Shastra involves neutralisation of earth radiation and Curry lines (named after Dr Manfred Curry). The negative energies can be detected through dowsing by using a pendulum or a bobber and can be neutralised using 'Diverters' invented and patented by Dr V M Rao. It is believed that Vastu affects only a quarter of our prosperity, the rest depends on destiny and fate. However, Vastu is an effective shield against unknown forces.

We know that every space is filled with molecules and atoms. C Ravichandran, in his 'Thesis on Diffusion Studies', says that the atoms fill a space in a certain order and that this order changes with the shape of the container or room. Atoms move in a straight line only in a square or rectangular building. In a shape such as a hexagon, triangle or any irregular shape, the pattern of movement of atoms is irregular and could have an adverse effect on the occupants of that space. A human body or any live body is like a box packed with energy. As a result, if a part of the energy space is enclosed by a four-walled structure called a building, then the building becomes a living organism!

The geographical directions are divided into eight directions, ie. East, West, North, South, North-West, South-West, North-East, South-East.

The North and East are very important directions. North represents Kubera (God of Wealth). As we know, North is important as per the earth's magnetic field. East is powerful as the Sun rises in the east and sustains life. Thus where the North and the East meet, it is owned by Jupiter and belongs to God.

The South and the West are ranked only next in importance. The South side (lorded over by the God of death), the South-East corner (by Fire), the Western direction and the South-West are inauspicious. The North-West is represented by Wind.

Certain Vastu guidelines for plots:

Do's:

Plots should be of uniform level, square or rectangular.

Plots with higher levels in the South and West, lower levels in North and East.

Water bodies like rivers, etc. towards the North, East or North-East.

Mountains, rocks towards South and West.

Don'ts:

Plots should not have a depression in the South West corner.

Plot should not be cut in North-East portion.

No wells in South-West direction. They should be in North-East only.

For Flats:

Entry should be in North or East, kitchen in the South-East, master bedrooms in South-West, the toilets should never be in the North-East (God) portion of the flat, no flats cut in the North-East portion, no violent pictures on the walls, not too many ancestor's photographs, especially above the deity in the pooja room.

A good Vastu consultant is a must. He should be rational, scientific, thorough. He should be able to grapple with the challenge of applying Vastu to 21st century needs, as well as to not be dogmatic and assist people in remedying existing problems to the best of his ability.

Vastu needs to be redone preferably at least every 6 months to a year, like dusting the cobwebs in the house.

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