PHYSICALLY ACTIVE JOB & EXERCISE

That feeling you get at 5 PM when the workday is coming to an end... but not for you. You know you need to get your workout in. Even though you might feel exhausted from all the walking, dragging, lifting, pushing, or bending that you have done, you still want / need to get to the gym and have a workout.

You know you need to work to earn a living, but you can't just leave the gym out of the picture for health and wellbeing reasons.

Here are some tips which may help you to fit in the gym to your busy working life.

WHERE YOU TRAIN IS KEY

Time is precious, you work your 8-hour shift and before you know it, half the day is gone! With social commitments, sometimes it's hard to fit in a bit of 'your time at the gym (which is so important to both mental and physical health).

Where you train can have a huge impact on your fitness schedule, and you may not even realise it. Leaving work to then either drive home to go back out to the gym or drive 20-30 minutes to get to the gym can have a huge add on to your session time (we could be talking 60+minutes in total with all travel both directions, traffic etc).

If it's a busy gym often your routine can be disrupted to the point that it adds extra time to the session or even, makes you miss exercises. The time which has been wasted massively eats up your social / family time which then, in turn, may make you want to miss the gym in the future.

With more and more corporate companies adding gyms, this is a perfect opportunity to head straight into the gym either before or after work (saving extra driving time – and money!), maximise your time as most corporate gyms are for employees only and quiet and so you get out with your session complete with minimal time used.

EXPERIMENT WITH THE VARIABLES

Working a physically demanding job and going to the gym after that can be tough. You get to the gym, but it just doesn't feel right, you're feeling just too tired.

That is okay: we're not machines. We get tired meaning we need rest. If it's just one workout where you feel tired, you can essentially do 2 things:

1) Start your session as you normally would and see what happens to your energy levels. Sometimes you have days where you would feel exhausted after work, get to the gym, start the session and your energy levels will steadily improve.

2) If the above scenario doesn't play out well, decrease your training intensity to a bearable level and get your workout done.

However, if you're consistently feeling beat before, during, and after a workout, it might be due to too much stress on your body. Obviously, you can try and cut back the work .... or

MODIFY THE TRAINING VOLUME, INTENSITY, AND / OR FREQUENCY.

1. REDUCING TRAINING VOLUME

Cut back my training volume and see if that helps. For weights for example - If you normally do 16 sets for chest and another 8 for triceps on a Monday workout, now drop to 12-13 sets for chest and 6 for triceps.

Do this for all workouts throughout the week and if the reduction in training volume helps, maintain that for a while. If, after a while, you feel like you can take on more volume, steadily add a few more sets throughout the week again.

However, if the reduction in training volume doesn't work and you are still feeling fatigued on a consistent basis, try the second option:

2. REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF HIGH INTENSITY SETS FOR WEIGHTS

High intensity sets refer to the ones where you are working with a high percentage of your 1 RM (85-95%).

What many people don't realise is this: Heavy sets are very taxing on both your central nervous system and body.

It's important to hit progressive overload when you train, but you need to keep in mind that such sets are the hardest to recover from.

So, the next step you can take after reducing training volume is to reduce the number of heavy sets per workout.

For example - If you follow a 5×5 style of training for my compound exercises (5 sets of 5 reps each), drop it to 4 sets for 5 reps for a week and see where that takes you.

As the workouts progress, gradually reduce training intensity and resting periods and by the time you get to isolation exercises. If cutting back on high-intensity sets still doesn't help you can consider the third option:

3. HAVING A DE-LOAD WEEK

De-loading is an essential part of any good program. The idea is, you train hard for 8-12 weeks and after that, you have a de-load or complete week off the gym.

During a de-load week, you can either reduce your training volume, intensity, or both by about 50%. No taking sets to failure, No running at 90% etc. You go in, get it done and leave. To truly reap the benefits of such a week, your workouts need to be light.

Allow for your body to recover from the heavy sessions, practice proper form on each exercise and get back stronger than before.

Also, keep in mind that we are all different and some people need more rest compared to others. If you feel like you're starting to become overtrained and each workout feels harder than the last, taking a de-load even if you took one just 4-8 weeks before is still a viable option.

The last approach usually comes in when you have tried everything else:

REDUCING TRAINING FREQUENCY

Sometimes life gets to us, and we need to compromise our training frequency. If even after the above 3 tactics, you still feel overwhelmed you can cut back the training days in your training schedule.

CONSIDER TRAINING AT DIFFERENT TIMES

We are all different and what might work well for one could be a total flop for another. To get a better understanding of your body, you can experiment with different training times and see what works best for you. Remember: you should give it a few weeks before drawing conclusions.

EARLY MORNING BEFORE WORK

The idea behind this approach is you get up, have a small pre-workout meal, and then hit the gym OR just wake up, have a coffee, and hit the gym – training fasted.

Pros of early morning training:

* It energises and uplifts you for the day ahead
* You get to have your evenings after work free to socialise and relax
* You will generally feel much more energetic, and sharper compared to training after work

Cons of early morning training:

* You should have extra-long warm up sessions. A good idea is to foam roll the tight areas at the start to increase circulation to those areas
* You might have a very hard time starting your workout due to sleepiness
* You must wake up earlier than usual to prepare for working out

LUNCH TIME SESSIONS

Easier to do if you have a corporate facility on site. This could be a good idea for those who carry a lot of stress in their work. Popping in for a quick 30 min session has been shown to destress the body, clear the head and help to improve your problem solving and creative thinking for the remainder of the working day.

Pros of training in your lunch:

- Often less busy in the gym so able to use the equipment you want
- Good to clear the head and improves work productivity for the remainder of the day.
- The session is then done, enabling you to go straight home and have more 'you' time.

Cons of training on your lunch:

- Workouts are often rushed due to shower time and actual eating time.
- Sessions tend to be lower intensity due to the fact you must go back to work
- Often sessions can only last for 30 mins max so often skip certain exercises

WHEN YOU FINISH WORK

This is another good option because if your company has a corporate gym, you can head straight in there before getting home (often meaning you miss the peak traffic times). This will still give you some socialising time. Here are just 3 tips to help you optimize training later at night:

Tip: Don't have a huge pre-workout meal. If you have 1,200 calories left for the day, split them in half or 60/40 but leave some calories for a post-workout meal. Studies have shown that post-workout protein and carbohydrates can have a positive effect on protein synthesis and stop a process called proteolysis (where the body starts breaking down muscle proteins into smaller amino acids). The other downside of having a huge meal is you will probably start feeling sleepy and lethargic.

Pros of training after work:

- You get to fuel your body with food for possibly a better workout
- You get a chance to unwind and relax for a while after work to get your head in the game
- You get to skip the after-work peak traffic, making the most of your time

Cons of training after work:

- You have all day to talk yourself out of going to the gym
- If you go home first, you might start feeling tired and unmotivated to get going
- Your post-workout meal could make it harder for you to fall asleep

HAVE YOUR HARDER SESSIONS ON YOUR DAYS OFF

This is yet another good way to get some of your workouts in without feeling overwhelmed during the working week. If you work Monday through Friday and have the weekend off, this schedule can work great for you. Do 2-3 of your workouts during the work week and leave the hardest ones for the weekend.

REDUCE ENDURANCE CARDIOVASCULAR WORK

Before we go any further, cardio is great! It has so many benefits and you should do at least 30 minutes a day regardless of if you're trying to build muscle or lose fat.

However, cardio is still a form of physical activity and even though an hour of LISS cycling on the bike might not seem very challenging, it still puts stress on your body.

When you add that additional stress to your central nervous system and muscles combined with the existing one from working a physical job and lifting weights, it all adds up and contributes to you feeling overtrained.

Remember these 30+ minutes of cardio can be mixed in throughout your day. If you are feeling fatigued, drop back on the cardio in your specific gym sessions and concentrate on the weights.

ADJUST TO A HIGHER HEALTHY CALORIE DIET

A lot of people are deliberately shooting themselves in the foot with this one.

If your diet isn't on point and you aren't eating enough calories to meet the demands of your highly active lifestyle, you won't be able to make noticeable progress, you may struggle for energy, motivation and you might even lose weight over time (regarding muscle).

EAT A COMBINATION OF FATS, SLOW-DIGESTING CARBS AND PROTEIN

To maintain high energy throughout the day, we need to be feeding our body with quality foods containing complex carbs, healthy fats, and protein. Eating nothing but fast-food junk every day is not only bad for your health and can lead to numerous diseases, but it also often causes bloating and energy crashes.

Does this mean you can't enjoy a chocolate bar at lunch? Of course not. Indulging in a bit of guilty pleasure foods is not going to set you back......just not every day.

Don't forget to drink water throughout the day. Proper hydration can be the difference between feeling alert, focused, energetic, and overall positive vs feeling crappy, depressed, and lethargic. Often our busy schedule comes in the way, and we get so focused with our tasks that we completely forget to hydrate well.

GET 7 TO 9 HOURS OF SLEEP PER NIGHT

You've probably heard this advice many times and the simple fact is – there is no way around it. Sleep is essential for us. It allows for our body and central nervous system to recuperate and getting enough for your individual needs is crucial not only to maintain a good balance between working out and having a physical job but to improve all areas of your life, as well.

SOME DAYS WILL FEEL TOUGH. REGULATE AND GET IT DONE. YOU'LL BE PROUD OF YOURSELF

Hopefully, this content has been of help to you if you're struggling to balance a highly active lifestyle with working out and making great progress in that direction.

Remember, there will always be bad days. Days where you simply feel tired and fatigued and going to the gym feels much more like a chore rather than something you love doing that brings value to your life.

Those are the days where most of all, you should listen to your body. Don't try to power through a workout if you don't feel well. Take a step back, use lighter weights, have a de-load week, or restructure your entire program if you must.

Some days won't be easy. Regulate and get it done. You'll be proud of yourself.