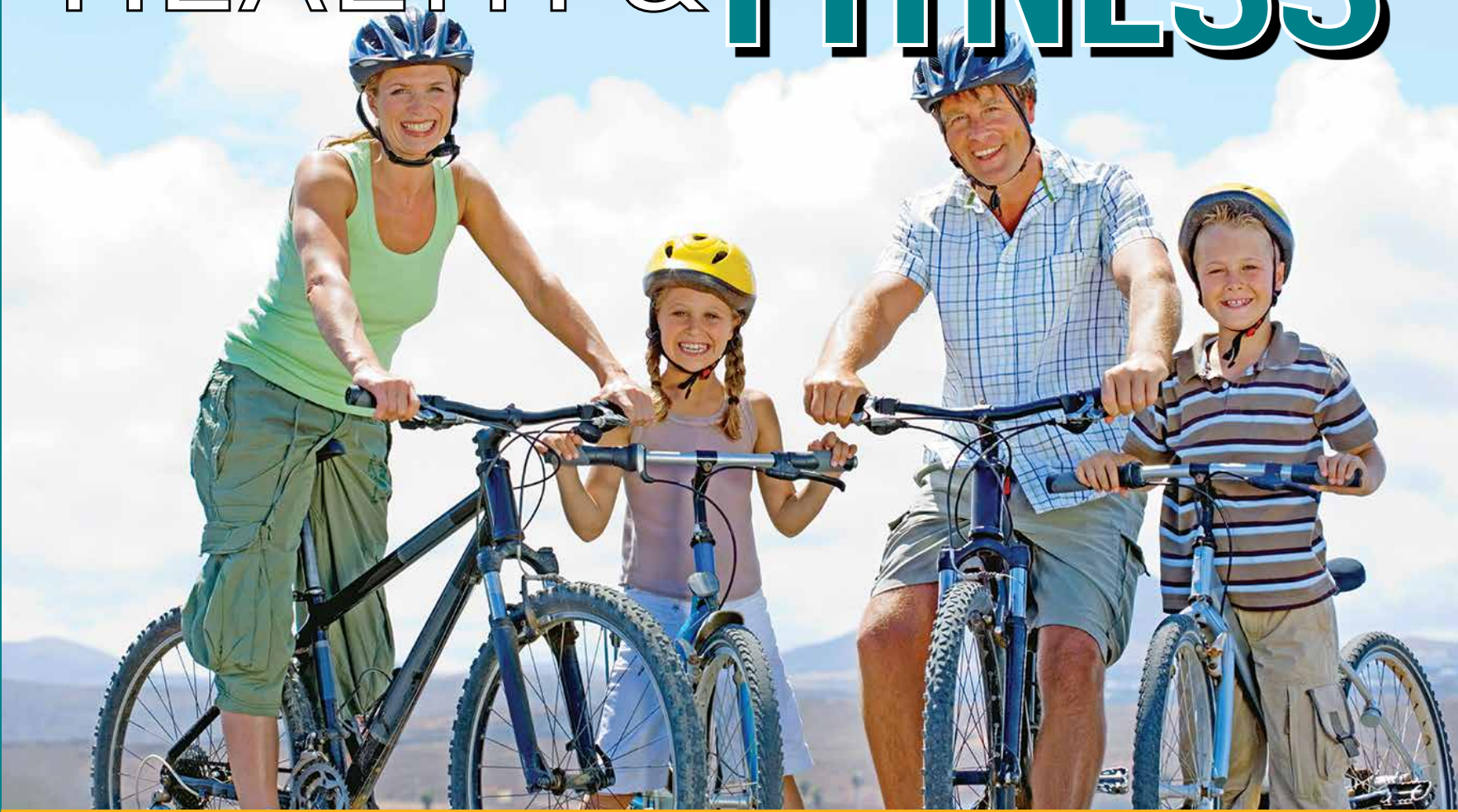


HEALTH & FITNESS



- Joining a gym
- Health tips
- Find a therapist



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Curious but unsure about joining a gym?

These 5 expert tips can help

You know staying active is important, especially as you age, so you're considering signing up for a local gym. The problem is, a gym can be intimidating! If you've put off joining a gym for this reason, here's what you need to know to feel comfortable and confident.

Exercise and healthy aging

Exercise is part of a healthy lifestyle at every age, but it is particularly important for seniors. Why? Sharlyn Green, a national trainer with SilverSneakers, says it goes beyond physical wellness.

"Regular exercise can help you maintain a healthy weight, boost your memory and decrease the risk for some diseases such as Type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease," she said. "It can help you stay independent and able to keep doing the things you enjoy. It's time to bust the misconception that gyms are only for younger people and fitness enthusiasts. Gyms are for everyone, no matter their age or abilities."

To help everyone feel comfortable and confident as a new gym member, Green recommends these steps:

Step 1: Get a tour

Have someone who works for the gym show you where everything is. Don't expect to understand immediately what it all does or how to use it. You're simply establishing baseline knowledge so you can build your experience from there.

Remember, don't be afraid to ask questions during or after your tour. Employees at a good gym will take an inclusive approach and be happy to help you by clarifying information or guiding you appropriately.

Step 2: Request a training program

People new to gyms typically get the best results from a personalized program created by a trainer. Print out the program for reference and to record what you do - which machines, how much weight, how many times you lift, etc.

Another option: For those who want a hybrid approach of working out at home or in a gym environment, participate in live, instructor-led and on-demand virtual classes and use the SilverSneakers GO mobile app to get workout programs you can tailor to your fitness level and track your progress. There you can access live options for people who want a hybrid approach of working out at home or in a gym.

Step 3: Know the exercises in your program

It's important to know where the equipment you need is and how to use it. Work with a trainer if you have questions. This person can guide you on proper techniques so you get the most out of your workouts and prevent accidents.

Understanding the equipment and gym etiquette is important for your safety and others'. For example, you don't want to unintentionally walk into someone's workout space and cause them to trip, fall or drop heavy weights.

Step 4: Learn how to adjust machines

Understanding the purpose of a machine is the first step, then you need to know how to adjust it to fit your needs. Depending on your height, weight, fitness level and goals, you may need to adjust certain machines every time you use them.

When in doubt, ask. It's better to pause and use a machine correctly than go forward and risk hurting yourself or others. A trainer or gym employee can help you, so don't be shy.

Step 5: Know how much weight or resistance to use

A good trainer will guide you in finding the appropriate weight or resistance for

each exercise and share that information in your program. Use this as a foundation and adjust as needed, keeping in mind that as you progress, you'll likely make changes to continue your health journey.

Again, if something isn't clear, ask. It's always better to start easier and adjust up rather than start too difficult and risk hurting yourself.

"The machines and different spaces at the gym can be a great asset for seniors who want to focus on their well-being," said Green. "Remember to create a well-rounded workout routine that includes stretching, strength training and cardio to help improve flexibility, muscle mass, heart health and much more."

To learn more or check eligibility, visit SilverSneakers.com.

(BPT)

SPRING 2023 HEALTH & Fitness

A publication of
*Southern Lakes
Newspapers*
MyRacineCounty.com

1102 Ann St.
Delavan, WI 53115
(262) 728-3411

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above: SilverSneakers offers a broad range of physical activity, mental enrichment and social engagement opportunities in 2023. Members can go to thousands of fitness locations across the nation, plus take group exercise classes designed for seniors and led by supportive instructors.

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10 health tips doctors encourage you to try today

Want to make a fresh start and invest in your health? You may be unsure what changes will have the biggest impact. Doctors say that the easy, tangible actions you take are some of the most important.

“Many people focus on big-picture health goals,” says Jack Resneck, Jr., M.D., president of the American Medical Association. “The good news is that small, positive health choices made right now can have long-lasting effects.”

Want to get started today? Here are the 10 recommendations the AMA top your list:

1. Exercise is essential for your physical and mental health, so get moving today. A good rule of thumb for adults is at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity.

2. Vaccination is the best protection against a number of serious illnesses. To protect yourself and your family, get up to date on your vaccines, including the annual flu shot and the COVID-19 vaccine

for everyone 6 months and older. Your doctor can let you know if you're due for a COVID booster.

If you have questions, speak with your physician and review trusted resources, including [getvaccineanswers.org](https://www.getvaccineanswers.org).

3. Get screened. Estimates based on statistical models show that since April 2020, millions of screenings for breast, colorectal, and prostate cancer diagnoses may have been missed due to pandemic-related care disruptions. Check in with your physician. If you're due for preventive care, tests or screenings, make an appointment. These measures are designed to keep you healthy and help your doctor spot certain conditions before they become more serious.

4. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, can increase your risk of heart attack or stroke, and it affects millions of Americans.

Visit [ManageYourBP.org](https://www.ManageYourBP.org) to understand what your blood pressure numbers mean and what you can do to get your blood

pressure under control.

5. One in three American adults has prediabetes, a condition that can lead to type 2 diabetes if left unmanaged. However, there are steps you can take that can help delay or even prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes. Learn your risk by taking a simple 2-minute self-screening test at [DoIHavePrediabetes.org](https://www.DoIHavePrediabetes.org). This resource also features helpful lifestyle tips that can help you reverse prediabetes.

6. Whenever possible, drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages and replace processed foods, especially those with added sodium and sugar, with nutritious, whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, herbs and spices.

7. If consuming alcohol, drink only in moderation. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans defines that as up to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men, and only by adults of legal drinking age.

8. Speak with your doctor or health care professional about quitting tobacco and nicotine use. Declare your home and car smokefree to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure.

9. Follow your doctor's instructions when taking prescription drugs – especially opioids. Always store and dispose of these medications safely to prevent misuse. Whenever prescribed antibiotics, take them exactly as directed. Not taking the full course can lead to antibiotic resistance, a serious public health problem, and will not make you feel better if you have a virus, such as a cold or flu.

10. Invest in your mental health by managing stress, getting sufficient sleep, exercising and seeking help from a mental health professional when you need it.

Find more health resources at [ama-assn.org](https://www.ama-assn.org).

(STATEPOINT)

How to find the right match for you ... in a therapist

According to a recent Forbes Health poll, improving mental health was cited as one of the top New Year's resolutions for 2023. For those seeking a mental healthcare provider, finding the right one can feel much like dating - overwhelming to find someone who shares the same values, meets your needs, and with whom you feel a connection. However, finding an attentive, caring and knowledgeable therapist can pay dividends on your mental well-being.

“Working with a provider with whom you have a strong and trusting relationship can have a significant impact on the success of mental health treatment. That's why it's important to find someone who aligns with your needs and makes you feel comfortable and heard so you can make progress in your mental health journey,” notes Dr. Shakira Espada-Campos, associate chief of behavioral health at virtual care provider MDLIVE.

While finding the right provider can seem daunting, according to Dr. Espada-Campos, there are a few simple things to keep in mind that can help you find the right match:

Understand your needs first

When it comes to your initial search, look for a provider that meets your basic needs.

First, determine whether you need a psychiatrist or therapist. While psychiatrists and therapists can provide treatment for many of the same issues, psychiatrists are doctors who can diagnose psychiatric conditions and prescribe medication, while therapists are licensed providers who can assess and support emotional or behavioral health concerns through talk therapy.

Once you know the type of professional you're looking for, do some digging into



Recognizing your wants and priorities in a mental healthcare provider can help make the process of finding the right therapist a bit more seamless.

STOCK PHOTO Health & Fitness

what a potential provider offers. Does their experience and specialty areas meet your needs? Do they offer night and weekend appointments? Doing the research upfront to determine compatibility at the base level will help minimize unexpected issues later.

Location doesn't have to be a dealbreaker

Virtual care has become an increasingly popular option for mental health services, as it provides private and convenient access to quality care in a timely manner. In fact, many health plans and employers have expanded benefits to cover virtual mental healthcare services.

This has allowed for the “dating” pool to expand, meaning it's easier than ever to find a provider that fits your needs –

even if they're in a different zip code. Building an ongoing relationship with a virtual therapist or psychiatrist is just as meaningful as it would be with an in-person provider.

Dig deep on the first date

Once you've found a provider that meets your needs, the first visit can help illuminate further. Just like on a first date, you may be apprehensive of coming on too strong by asking a ton of questions, but doing so offers the perfect opportunity to see whether the therapist is a match for you both on and off paper, which can lead to a trusting and healthy relationship in the long run.

Some questions that may help gauge your compatibility include: What is your

training and background? Do you have experience with the issues I am facing? How can we work together to achieve my goals? What does a typical session look like?

Recognize when it's time to move on

As with any relationship, the initial stage may be enjoyable, but then you start to get a nagging feeling that something isn't working. The same can be said for working with a therapist. Sometimes, a provider isn't the right fit; and that's OK.

If you find that sessions aren't making you feel better generally, you're not making progress with the goals you established together, or you feel they are not making adequate space for you, it might be time to find a different provider. No one should be forced to settle in a relationship, romantic or otherwise, if it doesn't feel quite right.

Breaking up isn't hard to do

There are many fish, er, mental health providers in the sea, so you shouldn't feel pressured to stay with one simply because you chose them originally. For example, MDLIVE's platform makes it easy for you to choose from an extensive list of licensed therapists and board-certified psychiatrists, schedule an appointment, and change your provider at any time if you feel it isn't quite working out. When you do feel it's time to cut ties with your therapist, it's important to be transparent - simply explain to your provider that you plan to end your treatment with them in your next session. This offers an opportunity to evaluate your work together and may also help you reflect on what you might need in a future provider.

(BPT)



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New study says millennial parents struggle to enjoy fun moments with their kids

All parents struggle with raising their kids to the best of their ability, and each generation has its unique challenges. A new study shows that today's millennial parents are having a hard time relaxing and having fun with their kids and that they wish they could create more spontaneous family moments.

Between the looming potential of an economic downturn and the realities of today's busy households, parents worry their kids are being shortchanged and that they're unable to devote enough time to family activities – whether planned or spur of the moment.

The study, conducted by Wakefield Research for Hostess Brands, uncovers some of the obstacles getting in the way of family fun, as well as identifies actions parents would like to lean into while their kids are young to create more spontaneous moments of joy.

Just how worried are millennial parents?

Today's parents are quite concerned about providing more fun for their children. Nearly three out of four parents (70%) admit they're worried they don't spend enough time doing fun activities with their child(ren), with approximately one-third (31%) reporting being "extremely" or "very worried" about this.

Nearly all of the parents surveyed (93%) cited a specific obstacle they feel gets in the way of being spontaneous with their kids.

What's getting in the way of family fun?

The survey identified two of the biggest hurdles preventing parents from creating and enjoying fun with their kids, whether through planned family activities or unplanned adventures.

- **Finances** – Perhaps not surprisingly, a family's finances are often an issue, with approximately two-thirds of parents (63%) saying money limitations prevent spontaneity and nearly half (46%) reporting that planned activities with their children are among the first to be cut when budgets are strained.

The survey also found that those with household incomes less than \$100,000 were significantly more likely to cite finances as an obstacle (73%) than those with household incomes more than \$100,000 (51%).

- **Busy schedules** – Between jobs, school and after-school activities, today's over-booked families often lose out on opportunities to simply enjoy being together.

Nearly one-third of the parents surveyed (30%) say weekly schedules crammed

with activities are among the top obstacles to family spontaneity and 41% cite job demands as getting in the way of being spontaneous during family time. Nearly three in five parents (59%) say they're so focused on planning structured activities for their children that they don't allow enough time for spontaneous fun.

Keeping up with the (social media) Joneses

One obstacle today's parents face that their parents and grandparents did not have to deal with is the pressure they feel to post their family fun online for all to see. Nearly three out of five (58%) parents report feeling pressured to create "shareworthy" family moments to post on social media.

The value of fun experiences

On the plus side, parents clearly recognize the value of spontaneous fun and the elements required for creating those special moments. Parents believe their children value experiences over material goods, with nearly two-thirds (62%) agreeing that their children would be more excited about a surprise trip to somewhere they've always wanted to go than a surprise gift of a toy on their wish list. And parents also value experiences

more – three out of four parents (75%) report they would get more joy and fulfillment from giving their children experiences during the holiday season as opposed to physical gifts.

Having special experiences together may be the key to more joyful holidays. The vast majority of millennial parents (90%) say creating spontaneous family moments this holiday season will be more emotionally rewarding than previous years - and over half (51%) believe spur-of-the-moment family adventures are the most memorable. What is one crucial element of fun, spontaneous moments? Nearly all millennial parents (99%) say sharing indulgent snacks is a big part of enjoying spontaneous moments as a family.

Find delicious snacks for the whole family while enjoying fun, spontaneous moments at HostessCakes.com.

(BPT)

A recent study found parents worry their kids are being shortchanged and that they're unable to devote enough time to family activities.

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