



This mini-book is a draft for beta-test purposes – thanks for reading! Please do not share or forward until the final draft is published. This will also get a design treatment by our team and a grammar review 😊. – SparkGuy

The SparkGuy 10+ Fitness Minutes Challenge

Transform Your Life 10 Minutes at a Time & Help Others Do the Same

Hello and Welcome to the 10+ Fitness Minutes Challenge! My name is Chris Downie, but you can call me SparkGuy, the username given to me by SparkPeople members. This challenge is directly what helped me reach goals like:

- Overcoming social anxiety and motivating a co-worker to lose 50 pounds along the way
- Becoming a successful entrepreneur by starting eBay's largest competitor with some friends and selling that company to eBay
- Meeting my wife and now raising our two boys
- Starting SparkPeople.com with a great team – one of the largest digital health and fitness companies in the world that has “sparked” millions of people to reach goals like healthy weight loss, fitness, and many more.

I can't wait to show you how this worked for me and many others and give you an exact blueprint to make it work for you as well!

I was fortunate that my first book became a New York Times Best Seller thanks to our website members. But now, I have decided to release this new “mini-book” completely free with the goal of helping even more people. A goal is to pioneer this mini-book format that is more than 90% shorter than a regular book since people are short of time these days, but still has the content quality of a book. Based on our work with more than 10 million people over the past decade, we know this challenge could help you reach your most meaningful goals and could even transform the USA and the world if we can get enough people to join in the fun!

Your benefits from participating in this challenge include:

- I'll show you how you truly can transform your life in as little as 10 minutes most days (many thousands of people have already done this for free on our website)
- More energy and happiness to reach your goals and live the life you have dreamed about
- Learn how to live a healthy lifestyle in a simple, fun, and exciting way
- Lose anywhere from 2 to 100+ pounds depending on your goals or maintain your existing weight in a healthy way
- See in detail that fitness really can be both fun and easy
- Become a better employee, leader, parent, friend, volunteer, entrepreneur, or anything else you want to do well
- The chance to help your friends, family, co-workers, and community in a simple, but powerful way

This challenge works for anyone – from the complete fitness beginner to advanced exercisers who average far more than 10 minutes per day (you'll learn why below). As my wife read this, she told me to point out that this program really is free. There is no catch.

This mini-book covers these areas and can be read in about 30 minutes:

1. Top 3 Goals for this Challenge
 2. How to Participate Starting Today!
 3. The history of 10+ Fitness Minutes challenge
 4. Why the 10+ Fitness Minutes Program Works – and can change your life!
 5. 10+ Fitness Minute Streaks
 6. Crisscross Effects
 7. More Energy Leads to Exponential Results
 8. True Happiness
 9. Healthy Leaders
 10. How this challenge will make a major impact on the USA and the world
 11. Testimonials
- Appendix: Additional Resources

As a beginning note, “10+ Fitness Minutes” simply means “10 or more minutes of exercise in a day”. You will find out below the reasons why this strategy works so well.

SparkCheers!

Chris “SparkGuy” Downie

Top 3 Challenge Goals

Here are three starting goals for the first phase of this challenge with a completion date of December 31, 2014 (we’re building ways to measure these goals now):

1. The first goal is to have at least 10,000 people read this mini-book. This will help show that the 10+ fitness minutes challenge is both simple and meaningful – a powerful combination. Tens of thousands of people at SparkPeople have said the strategy of taking small steps one at a time is what finally worked for them to reach amazing goals in all areas of life.
2. The second goal for the 10+ Fitness Minutes Challenge is to have at least 10,000 people participate in the challenge.
3. The third goal is for everyone to have fun along the way. One of the great secrets of setting and reaching small goals one at a time is that it makes your life so much more fun. We will build a feature to measure “fun”.

How To Participate Starting Today!

Here is all you need to participate in the 10+ Fitness Minutes Challenge starting today [internal note that this will change with launch of new features and some details are still to be added].

1. **First, join for Free (if you haven’t already done these steps)**
 - Join SparkPeople.com for free at <http://sparkpeople.com> (more than 15 million people have done this)
 - Download our app in the app stores
 - And/or “Like” the SparkPeople Facebook Fan page at: <http://facebook.com/sparkpeople>

2. **Track**

- Almost every day I will make a post to SparkPeople.com and the Facebook fan page asking people to “Hit Like” if they did at least 10 minutes of exercise or took any other small steps in any area of life to reach their goals today. Simply “Like” these posts.
- You can also choose to post your fitness activities to SparkPeople and use our streaks feature to track your 10+ Fitness Minutes streak (more below on streaks). To do this, simply go to the SparkStreaks page (<http://www.sparkpeople.com/myspark/streaks.asp>) and edit the weekly fitness goal into a 10 minute daily goal.

3. **Spread the Spark/Share with Friends**

- On Facebook, you can help what we call “spread the spark” by also hitting “Share” on these posts so that the posts will show up on your feed. This is a great way to motivate YOUR friends to get healthy and reach their goals.
- Another great way to spread the spark is to share this mini-book with your social network

In about 30-60 days, we will launch an exciting new way to track your participation in this challenge. I will announce this launch both on the site and in social media. I also blog regularly about my own 10+ fitness minutes streak and other topics to keep you motivated at:

http://www.sparkpeople.com/mypage_public_journal.asp?id=SPARKGUY

Are you ready to make your minutes count and start reaching goals?

History

I’ll now share some of my history to show how the 10+ Fitness Minutes Challenge changed my life and can apply to anyone in the world. The only reason I like sharing my story is to build credibility and show that I have 20 years of experience with this magic formula along with our team of experts. I passionately know and believe anyone can follow this same path to reach their goals. My goal is to show you how such a simple program can also be so meaningful to your life to help convince you to try this challenge.

I was a normal kid growing up in Cincinnati, Ohio with a high-level of social anxiety until this program changed my life. As so many of our members at SparkPeople say, “If I can do this, you can too!”

- As a kid and teen, I had social anxiety that made me feel like an outgoing person trapped in a shy person’s body. I was known as “the shyest kid in class” and would often go the entire day without talking to anyone. I was the proverbial kid who really did walk down the hall at school looking at his shoes instead of other people because of anxiety (if you look down, then you don’t have to talk to anyone!). Today, I joke that I’m making up for lost time when I do speeches and try to motivate people ☺. I grew up in a single-parent family with my mother and younger brother. We lived paycheck-to-paycheck for the most part in a semi-shady apartment complex, but had the essentials.
- In high school and then college at the University of Cincinnati, I often put together a fitness program where I’d get in great shape by going to the gym regularly. But, then life would get busy and I’d fall off my program because of exams or work. This would lead to frustration because of needing to “start over once again.” I later realized this was yo-yo fitness just like so many people experience yo-yo dieting.

- At my first job at Procter & Gamble after college, I had a co-worker named Larry once say, “I only have 8 years, 7 months, and 6 days until I retire.” He was overweight and didn’t eat healthy. I thought about this and realized that:
 - ... I was becoming sedentary working 50-60+ hours in front of a computer
 - ... I was regularly eating from vending machines and fast food
 - ... I wasn’t exercising enough, getting enough sunshine, eating fruits/vegetables, and more.

I then realized that I was on the early path to become just like Larry and didn’t want that to happen!

- Around that time, I started researching leadership skills and read books like Steven Covey’s “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” and Viktor Frankl’s “Man’s Search for Meaning” (my use of the word “meaningful” in this document is a tribute to the great Viktor Frankl). I know what I’ve done is “standing on the shoulders of giants” like these two leaders. This led to an epiphany. I realized that health professionals like personal trainers and dietitians typically did an incredible job with the specifics of what to eat and what exercises to do, but they were less likely to include areas like detailed goal setting and leadership in their programs. On the other hand, leadership experts did an amazing job with leadership theory, but they didn’t include the full value of consistent health and fitness in their programs as a top way to help people become a leader. So, I decided to smash these two types of expertise together and create a program that combined areas of life that help your body (like nutrition and fitness) with areas of life that help your mind (like goal setting, leadership, motivation, behavioral psychology) to maximize the benefits of all areas. Working on both of these areas leads to what we now call being a Healthy Leader.
- I sat down and thought about what was most important to me in life and listed these long-term goals: family, health and fitness, eventually becoming an entrepreneur, and others. I then broke those all the way down into short-term action steps with a focus on the combination of goal-setting and exercise as a way to get started with small steps. Specifically, I set a goal to do at least 10 minutes of exercise per day – usually in the morning before work. I averaged far more than 10 minutes, but 10 minutes was all I needed to do to reach my goal and continue the streak. As the days added up, my confidence in all areas of life started to soar. I ended up doing this streak 700 days in a row and it changed my life! In the sections below, I’ll expand on why this works and how you can do this.
- One activity I did to help me was to create a vision collage. To do this, I simply cut out pictures from magazines that represented my goals and made a collage. Then I hung this in my office. Anytime I was down on myself or facing a decision, I would look at this collage and visualize my goals and think, “THAT is what I’m working towards!” This would spark me to make good decisions on a daily or even hourly basis and continue building momentum. This was the inspiration for the Goal Board feature on SparkPeople.com.
- My confidence grew immediately, but after doing this program for 3-6 months, I could tell it was working better than anything I had ever tried and that I was on the way to conquering my social anxiety, getting fitter than I had ever been, and so much more. I knew I was onto something and wanted to help others. I’ve noticed through the years that once someone overcomes some type of challenge, they often develop a burning desire to help others do the same. I started this by writing a 5-10 page Microsoft Word document way back in 1995 and sharing it with friends, family, and co-workers. I’m excited to now be replicating that strategy many years later with this mini-book!

- A co-worker named Pat supported my streak – she would joke that “Chris has worked out 50 days in a row and I’ve sat on the couch 50 days in a row” (funny, but not-so-funny). Pat then read the original document and started using this same program. She walked into the office one day and wrote the number 1 on a yellow sticky note and put it on her door saying that she had worked out that morning. Pat then transferred locations and we just stayed in touch via email as friends supporting each other. Pat returned to our office one day for a meeting and had lost at least 50 pounds. She came into my office and said, “I was waiting to let you know in person that you changed my life.” She had also started a walking group where her group said, “Pat – if you can do it, we can do it!” Many years later, Pat used the inspiration from this to achieve a lifelong goal by living and working for a year in New York City.
- So, by working on my goals, I eventually sparked Pat and then she sparked many other people and who knows how many people those people sparked. I realized that **“Your daily actions and words impact more people than you realize!”** This was “the spark” that eventually inspired me to start SparkPeople.
- The spark program gave me so much passion and energy that eventually I left my job along with a friend. At first, we wanted to start a nonprofit called Spark Leadership that would teach college and high school students leadership skills. But, then my partner realized that we could build our own website -- and he had a vision to build a website that was a stock market for products (like computers, collectibles, etc.). We later switched to an auction model similar to eBay.
- To make a long story short, our online auction company named Up4Sale grew into eBay’s largest competitor with only 5 people on our team and no outside investors. eBay acquired our company in 1998 making us their first acquisition just prior to their IPO. I even ended up meeting my wife at eBay and now we have 2 boys. This gave me the funds to eventually start SparkPeople.
- Think back to the beginning of this story: NONE of these personal and professional results would have been possible without the 10+ fitness minutes program that helped me. And I had already seen with Pat that the program was replicable to help other people.
- After catching up on my sleep from the crazy work hours of an internet startup, I realized something quite surprising after my history of anxiety – that my true mission in life is to help other people reach their goals – especially using this simple strategy. To do this, it was time to start a new company with the mission to SPARK millions of PEOPLE to reach their goals using health and fitness as a springboard to success in all areas of life. I believe in this mission so much that I invested a significant amount of what I earned from the eBay acquisition on this company. And now I’m just a small part of an amazing team of health, technology, and business experts passionate about helping other people. This team also includes our members who reach goals and then spread the spark to their social networks.
- We started this in the year 2000 from scratch. Now, each month more than 10 million people visit one of the SparkPeople websites or mobile apps and tens of thousands of lives have been transformed. But, we’re excited about launching this 10+ Fitness Minutes Challenge as a new simple program to help even more people reach goals!

- If you are interested in reading more about the history of this program and story, it was published in a New York Times Bestselling book (thanks to our members!) mentioned in the additional resources section.

Why 10+ Fitness Minutes Works – and Can Change Your Life!

Now that you see what can happen as a result of this program from both my story and Pat’s story, I’ll share details of why this works and how you can do it.

First, people often wonder why I picked 10 minutes – isn’t that too short to really make a difference? Here are the top reasons I chose 10 minutes:

1. Simplicity/consistency – I started this as a busy corporate employee. Anyone can find at least 10 minutes most days to consistently exercise. A simple program is one that makes it more likely people will actually stick to the program. Importantly, I recommend that you base your program on simple exercises that anyone can do at home and then make other activities like going to gym more like extra credit.
2. Make it a Streak – a low “hurdle” of only 10 minutes makes it easy to build a streak around this program like I did originally. Learn more about streaks below.
3. Set goals/reach goals – one of the most important parts of this program is that you aren’t just doing exercise. Instead you are also learning to set and reach one small goal at a time. This builds your momentum (visualize the snowball from a cartoon rolling downhill getting bigger and faster as momentum builds). We hear from so many people who say they have lost all hope that they can reach goals. Eventually this skill of reaching goals from this program will give you an incredible amount of self-confidence and hope that you can reach your most meaningful goals in life. Your results will then “Crisscross” into reaching goals in other areas of life (more on this in the Crisscross Effects section below). This combination of fitness plus goal-setting guarantees that you will improve both physically and mentally.
4. Connect to your bigger goals – an important part of this process is to keep in mind your most meaningful goals in life and both understand and believe that being healthy and fit will make it more likely that you will reach those goals, just like Pat and I did (and many others). Once you do understand and believe this, then this program will be **both simple and meaningful** – an incredibly powerful combination that could make you unstoppable. Then, every time you exercise or even think about getting started, you can visualize your bigger goals to get you moving and keep you moving!
5. The getting-started trick—changing behavior -- this is one of the most important reasons 10 minutes works. Often, just getting started is the hardest part about exercising. So, if you tell yourself that you only need to do 10 minutes, it makes “getting started” dramatically easier than if you think you need to do an hour of exercise. Then, once you do get started, you have two options. First, you can stop at 10 minutes and be happy and content that you truly and honestly met your goal (and kept your streak alive if you are doing a streak!). But second, I can guarantee you that there will be many days that once you get started, you’ll end up doing 15, 20, 30 minutes or even more because **you are happily enjoying yourself!** This “trick” still works on me today. Since changing behaviors can be so difficult, this trick actually makes it fun to change to a positive behavior.

6. No excuses possible – it's almost impossible to say that you can't find 10 minutes most days of the week at home to do fitness (even if it's while watching TV)
7. Makes your life a game – since this program is so simple and fun (especially if you are doing a streak), it really does make your life like a real-world game to reach goals and get such great benefits. You then start to look to other ways you can make your life like a game.

You can now see that the 10+ fitness minutes strategy is a simple, but powerful combination of a smart fitness program and the power of goal-setting (and other aspects of behavioral psychology). Even though it doesn't sound exciting, consistency really is a key. So, since "consistency" doesn't sound exciting, we figured out fun and exciting ways to help you stay consistent like streaks 😊.

For example, 3 of the biggest mistakes I see from people building a fitness program are:

1. Basing a fitness program on NEEDING to go somewhere else – like a gym
2. Thinking that "it doesn't count as a workout" if it's not a long time period like an hour
3. Not working out consistently for a long enough time period to hit the Fitness Tipping Point

Since life inevitably gets busy for all of us, the first two mistakes almost guarantee that people will make the third mistake and fall off the fitness wagon at some point.

Here's what I realized about a fitness program: at first, you really do need to put more energy into the fitness program than the benefits you get back from the program. This doesn't seem fair and justifiably makes many people think fitness isn't worth their time. They then often either quit fitness altogether, or they do what I call yo-yo fitness – where you get into shape, then fall off, then have to start all over back at the point where it takes more effort than the results you get back. A common pattern is that people hear that exercise will make you feel great. So, they start off by exercising too much – making them feel either sore, exhausted, or even causing injury and then they think, "This isn't making me feel great – maybe I'm just not good at this."

But, once you do a well-designed fitness program consistently, this equation flip-flops and eventually the benefits you get from your fitness program will VASTLY outweigh the effort you put into the program (believe me, this will be very obvious to you and you'll be ecstatic). You will build a solid foundation one day at a time. But, because of the mistakes listed above, most people never reach this state.

Remember, some of the most rewarding things in life can be a challenge at first. But, we want to make this challenge as easy as possible. This is exactly why we focus on both:

- Short workouts – even 10 minutes is enough to be a real workout
- Base your workout at home (or anywhere that you don't have to "leave" just to go work out)

Then, if you go to the gym, that is like "extra credit". I remember following this program originally and being so HAPPY when I went to the gym that the people working at the gym honestly asked me why I was so happy. I told them that coming to the gym was extra credit for me, so it was fun! On the other hand, any time I hear someone say, "Oh, I need to get to the gym" in a negative tone, I know the odds are high that they will fall off their fitness program because they are looking at it as a chore – and nobody likes chores!

Best Practices for the 10+ Fitness Minutes Challenge

- Do it at home as a base – by basing your program on exercises you can do at home, you’ll have no excuses to not be able to find at least 10 minutes in a day. Then, you can use the gym or other places as extra credit (unless you are really sure you’ll make it to the gym that day)
- Get others to join in – builds social support that is proven to help you succeed
- Can do it broken up throughout the day – you don’t need to do all of your fitness at once, you can break it up into different periods throughout the day
- Do it in the morning whenever possible – there are many benefits of exercise in the morning including helping you wake up and jump into your day. Plus, if you are doing a streak, then you are able to increase your streak right away as a great confidence-builder to your day
- Believe this works! (because it does) -- most people think you need to exercise 30-60 minutes or more for it to “count”. This all-or-nothing approach can work for some, but is very high risk and likely to fail for many people.

I’ve been fortunate to have many amazing experts validate the SparkPeople program through the years, including top behavioral psychologists from institutions like the Duke Diet and Fitness Center. We also have personal trainers, dietitians, behavioral psychologists, and other experts on the SparkPeople employee team.

10+ Fitness Minute Streaks

I recommend that you at least try to make your 10+ fitness minutes program into a daily streak to see if this strategy works for you (there are other variations below if it doesn’t). This simply means that you do it each day and then keep track of the number of days in a row you have exercised for at least 10 minutes. Here are some top points about streaks:

- A 10+ Fitness Minutes streak is like brushing your teeth – some people comment that it’s “too extreme” to exercise every day. This goes back to the magic of using only 10 minutes of exercise at home as a low hurdle – even if it’s just walking around the block. I often ask this question: “is brushing your teeth every day an extreme activity?”
- Each day becomes multiple types of coaching – every day your number increases, the increase serves as:
 - A reward – it becomes a fun reward seeing your numbers add up. Once the days really start adding up, you might be surprised at just how much confidence you build in all areas of life
 - An accountability tool – your streak keeps you accountable
 - A coach – each increase is like getting a pat on the back from your coach
- Results -- people often wonder when they’ll start to see results from a streak. Here are different levels of success I see (with the caveat that everyone is different, so results may vary):
 - Even on Day 1 you might feel the hope and joy of the accomplishment of setting a goal, reaching that goal, and then tracking it – that you are starting an exciting journey
 - Days 2-14 can be a fun, honeymoon-type stage. As crazy as it sounds, 10 minutes per day for 14 days really could build the foundation that changes the course of the rest of your life.

- Days 15-30 are often when you start to really turn this into a habit. This can also be a time of high risk since you really haven't "invested" that much into your streak yet, so you could get distracted and fall off.
 - Days 31-89 are a huge test in my experience. This is when you are probably still putting in more effort compared to the results you get back physically (although there can still be very strong physical benefits and mental benefits from setting, reaching, and tracking goals). Keep in mind that this is the period when true magic is happening even if the results feel less than your effort.
 - Days 90-180 have been the period where I have hit the exercise tipping point – where you start seeing glimpses of the amazing benefits and then actually hit that tipping point. I remember when this first happened to me, I was the happiest I had ever been in my life and had more energy than I'd ever had.
 - Days 181 plus – once you hit the tipping point, this really becomes fun. Depending on your life at the time, you can choose to just maintain your program if you are busy, or you might ramp up your efforts in fun ways. By this point, you'll also most likely be getting amazing results in all areas of your life.
- Failure before success -- there is a good chance that you will fail at some point in your streak, especially in the early stages. This happens all the time for me. I recently failed more than 5 times before my current streak "stuck". Every time this happens, just reflect on why you missed and what you could do better next time. Failure can be great if you learn from it. But then at some point if you persist, the odds are good that this will stick. This leads to the next point...
 - You just won't miss – when your streak is based on a simple program and the streak is meaningful to you because it connects to your big goals in life, you will hit a point in your streak where it would take a real calamity to end your streak. We have members on SparkPeople who have more than 1,000-day streaks. I remember doing pushups by my bed near midnight sometimes as part of keeping my original streak alive. This will become so important to you that you'll re-arrange your schedule if necessary to make sure you get at least 10 minutes. This does a few important things:
 1. First, you start building incredibly strong determination to reach your goals – this determination will then lead to breakthroughs for other goals
 2. Second, your fitness consistency will give you more energy than you've ever had to reach your goals
 3. These two points then become a virtuous cycle that feeds on itself and could truly change the trajectory of your life.
 - Self-improvement program – doing a 10+ fitness minutes streak becomes a simple and exciting framework for a self-improvement program that can touch every area of your life. This way, you can keep notes along the way about your successes and challenges. As you'll learn below, this will then "Crisscross" into all areas of your life.
 - Vacation – I still have vivid memories of keeping my original streak alive while on vacation, like doing sprints on the beach on Jekyll Island, Georgia on a trip with college friends. Then, in another win/win, during the cold and dark mornings of the following winter, I remember visualizing those sprints while doing pushups at 6am before work. Right now I visualize getting back to the famous Kalalua Trail on Kauai, Hawaii with my family while doing workouts.
 - Streak variations – if you like this concept in general, but really don't want to do a daily streak, a twist on a streak is to do another type of streak:

- Percentage streak – you can set a goal to exercise a certain percentage of days. This is something you can track on SparkPeople as part of a 10+ fitness minutes streak. Seeing a high percentage even if you miss a day to end your daily streak is also one way to get right back on board
- Weeks streak – you could set a goal to exercise 3-5 times per week and then keep a streak of the number of weeks in a row you can do this
- Free pass – you could give yourself a free pass after every X days to use in case you miss a day
- Beyond fitness – you can choose to do a streak on just about anything (food, water, sleep, etc.). This could intentionally be a short-term 14-21 day streak to build a habit
- There could be other variations – the best type of streak is the one that will motivate you.

What Exercises To Do?

For the purposes of this mini-book, I'll share the basics and then put links to more resources at SparkPeople.com in the appendix.

These are the types of exercises I recommend that you do for this challenge – these are all exercises that have worked for me for many years. You'll see that I put a premium on exercises that can be done at home for little to no cost – and then build on that foundation with other options.

Here are exercises you can do at home with no cost:

Pushups	Crunches	Lunges
Stretching	Walking	Running
Hiking	Sprints	

Here are exercises you can do at home at low cost:

Jump Rope	Swiss Ball (for crunches, back exercises, etc.)	Dumbbells and other light weight sets
Mini-trampoline		

Here are more advanced options (that are completely optional):

Gym Membership	Exercise Bike (or other home gym equipment)	Biking
Join a Sports Team		

Here are general principles for your fitness program:

- Try to have a good all-around program that includes cardio, strength, core, and higher intensity exercises as long as you are medically able to do this. I am a big fan of building a solid foundation with the basics and then adding in higher intensity exercises like jump rope and sprints. These types of exercises give great benefits and take little time – a winning combo!
- Never over-do it, especially at the beginning of your program. It's not worth the risk. This just increases your odds of fatigue, soreness, or even injury, which is a major enemy to consistency and streaks 😊.

- Here is one of my favorite arguments in favor of taking small amounts of time to do exercise: If you are sitting in front of a computer for many hours per day, your productivity will drop over time. But, by simply taking a quick fitness break, you will get your blood flowing and bring your productivity levels back up. This means in a single day your productivity is at least equal to not exercising. But, then carry this out over months or even years and the benefits of exercise dramatically outweigh the time investment. This also fits right in with emerging research showing that sitting for long time periods can be very detrimental to your health.

Crisscross Effects

This program may seem like it's mostly about fitness and goal-setting so far. But, this is just a very strong starting point. The program ends up touching all areas of life in a fun way. Here's how...

When I did my original streak, I noticed that this program started feeling like a game, where:

1. I started looking for other areas of life to improve
2. Because of my momentum from the 10+ fitness minutes streak, it literally became much easier to improve in other areas of life. Some improvements even came naturally with no additional effort.

These two steps are a very strong formula. Eventually, we named this the Crisscross Effect – where improvements in one area of life can “crisscross” to other areas of life – either naturally with no effort, or by setting goals in that area of life. Here are examples showing how the Crisscross Effect works:

Nutrition

As my fitness improved, I noticed many great Crisscross Effects on my nutrition, including:

- I consciously wanted to make better and healthier food choices. This included steps like placing healthy snacks like nuts and raisins in my car, which then helped me choose to not stop at fast food restaurants on the way home from work (it was amazing, my steering wheel would automatically turn off the freeway at the Taco Bell exit! Haha).
- My fitter body seemed to naturally crave healthier foods like fruits and vegetables and water. Interestingly, I found that many vegetables actually tasted better.
- Once I started drinking more water, it became easier to mostly give up sweetened drinks like soda. In fact, these drinks now tasted so sweet to my palate that it was no longer pleasant to drink them.

If you have a weight loss goal, really think about these points for a moment. Nowhere in here did I talk about typical “diet talk” like “using willpower” and “depriving yourself”. In fact, it was the reverse where healthier options honestly started tasting better than unhealthy options – a true win/win scenario.

This is one of the top reasons I highly recommend using this simple 10+ fitness minutes program as a smart way to either lose weight or maintain weight in a healthy way. It ends up making weight loss and nutrition much easier – you start living a healthy lifestyle one step at a time and don't need to “diet”.

Stress

Stress is a part of everyone's life. With a history of anxiety, I lived with stress on a daily basis. Exercise has been scientifically proven to reduce the impact of stress on your body. Similarly, setting and reaching goals one at a time will increase your self-confidence and reduce stress about many types of

situations. So, this combination of exercise and goal-setting has a profound Crisscross Effect on your stress levels. You might find – like I did -- that situations that were once stressful started to feel more like a challenge that I knew I could overcome. There is research showing that once you view something as a challenge and not a stressor, your body physiologically handles these situations in a healthier way.

Reducing stress also has a strong Crisscross Effect with nutrition and weight loss. Over the past decade, SparkPeople members have consistently reported that emotional eating is their top issue when it comes to weight loss. People end up emotionally eating over finances, relationships, and much more. By reducing the impact of stress levels and lowering the number of stressors in life, it becomes more likely you'll be able to make healthy food choices and not fall off track.

Sleep

I remember my typical bedtime routine prior to starting this program. After going to bed, I would first worry about all the mistakes I made that day and beat myself up over them. After finishing that, I'd then worry about everything that could happen the next day. This ended up lowering the quality of my sleep, which then became a self-fulfilling prophecy of lower energy and happiness the following day. Of course, there are many other reasons for too little sleep. Good sleep is highly under-rated in our society.

Healthy Habits

It became fun to look at all areas of health to see where I could build healthy habits. One example was making sure to floss every day. Since your mouth health has been shown to be connected to your heart health, this is another Crisscross Effect.

There are many other areas related to this today, like avoiding toxic chemicals wherever possible (like BPA in many plastic products for example). Each new healthy habit becomes an investment in your body.

Relationships

Improved relationships were a big surprise out of my original program, but this makes so much sense. When you are fitter, eating better, sleeping better, have more energy, have more self-confidence, and more...then your interactions with other people will naturally become more positive. When you start seeing that natural improvement, you might then make this area a conscious goal. This is both for general communication and relationships, and also because you'll get excited about helping other people reach their goals and being a Healthy Leader (see below).

Control Your Destiny

One of the best Crisscross Effects is that you will start to feel more in control of your destiny. I learned from Viktor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning* that no matter what your circumstances are, you ALWAYS have the freedom to choose how to respond. Frankl learned this himself while in a Nazi concentration camp. This lesson hit me hard. I figured that if this man could still choose to have freedom in a concentration camp even after everything had been stripped from him, then I could figure out how to take personal responsibility for my destiny. This program is designed to do that for you as well.

Goals

As you set small goals and reach those with your fitness and other health areas, and as your energy and happiness grows, this will naturally lead you to start setting and reaching goals in all areas of life. I remember this program helped me be a dramatically better employee at Procter & Gamble – to the point that 5 higher-level managers joined together and wrote a letter to a member of senior management about how much I was helping them do their job. My improved performance and results

like this letter then directly led to a large promotion. My lessons learned from this experience at P&G then became a top reason for my success in other endeavors. Similarly, we have had so many people in the SparkPeople community talk about how their experience as leaders in our community then helped them get promotions at work and reach other major goals.

Virtuous Cycle/Vicious Cycle

As you can see from this CrissCross Effects section, every area of life can work together in a positive way – this becomes a virtuous cycle that continually spirals up. Also, keep in mind that this works in reverse as well. For example, if you are making poor food choices, aren't fit, and have high stress levels, then your sleep, energy, relationships, and happiness might go down. Unfortunately, this can become a vicious cycle with many negative consequences.

The 10+ Fitness minutes challenge program is specifically designed to both STOP a vicious cycle in its tracks and START a virtuous cycle (or continue it). Most people have untapped potential in life. Now is your chance to tap into your true potential in life!

More Energy Leads to Exponential Results

I originally came up with the name “SparkPeople” based on our mission to “spark” millions of people to reach their goals using health and fitness as a springboard to success in all areas of life. But, another way that “spark” applies relates to energy. Possibly the most important benefit of this program is that you will eventually have more energy than you've ever had in your life.

Close your eyes and visualize having the extra energy to be able to get one more thing done per day, or maybe even 5 more things done per day when you really reach your potential. You will also likely be thinking more clearly than ever – it will feel like your brain can work faster and more efficiently. Many times those “extra” projects you can complete are the ones that go beyond your normal routine and lead to the biggest results – either a project at work that leads to a big win, or maybe spending extra quality time with your kids, spouse, or friends. Then, carry that forward for days, months, and years. This can lead to not just linear results where you improve slowly one step at a time, but instead it can lead to exponential results that can change the course of your life just like it did for Pat and me.

Here's a fun story to illustrate this concept: when I was first starting my original streak, I read about the benefits of jump rope. I bought a jump rope and honestly could not do 10 jumps in a row. So, testing my integration of fitness and goal setting, I set a goal to do 10 jumps in a row...and reached that goal. After more practice, I set a goal to do 100 jumps in a row...and reached that goal. Then, after more practice I set a goal to do 1,000 jumps in a row (yes, without a mistake)...and reached that goal (and anyone can do this with practice).

The point for this story is that my results didn't improve in a linear way from 10 to 20 to 30. Instead, I went from 10 to 100 to 1,000. Imagine getting these types of exponential results in all areas of your life including your energy levels. At the peak of my original 700-day streak, my energy levels were incredibly high and I was getting far more accomplished than I had ever before in my life. This is directly what led me to do my part in building eBay's leading competitor with a team of only 5 people. And to share my mistakes, one of the biggest mistakes I ever made was stopping my fitness streak at the start of this company thinking that I had to focus on the company. I still have some allergies to this day that are likely a result of the stress from that company.

Here's another way of looking at the benefits of more energy. I did a speech for a group of high-level executives at Fortune magazine and someone asked about the challenges of balancing the areas of work life, personal life, and other activities like community service. My response was that yes, this will always be a challenge. But, if you really live this program, then what happens is that your "energy pie" actually expands and you can literally get more done in all of the areas of your pie.

One more story related to this: I typically don't like "scare tactics", but let's face it, health and fitness is an area where there can be many scary outcomes. Not too long ago, I gave a presentation to an MBA class at Santa Clara University – the students were employees of Google, Apple, Cisco, and many other top companies (I was a bit intimidated!). Their average age was around 25. I spent most of my time emphasizing the positives of this program. But, I also warned them that while

This program could help them more than they realize,

Not living a healthy lifestyle could also hurt them more than they realize

In the form of serious future health issues.

There is at least some chance that this simple 10+ fitness minutes challenge could directly prevent you or someone you love from that stress-induced heart attack, from diabetes, or from some other serious health issue.

Now back to being positive...and happy!

True Happiness

When I give speeches about my story and how the 10+ fitness minutes program helped me, one story I always tell is that somewhere around 3 months into my streak, I remember driving down the freeway, singing a song on the radio, and realizing that I was now happier than at any point in my life.

I was always a generally happy and optimistic person for the most part. But, this was different. My fitness, health, energy levels, sense of accomplishment, improved relationships, and desire to authentically help other people – all joined together to form this incredible feeling of true happiness that probably crossed over into feeling ecstatic especially because of the energy levels.

A recent documentary called *Happy* set out to explore the key characteristics that make people happy and found 3 keys:

1. Exercise/physical activity – exercise raises levels of dopamine, a neurotransmitter in the brain that causes us to feel happy.
2. Connection with friends/family/community – as mentioned above in the Crisscross Effects section, improved relationships are a key benefit to the 10+ Fitness Minutes program.
3. Service to others/compassion – by simply helping your existing social network by getting them involved in this, you will be making yourself happy. Plus, by expanding your "energy pie", you'll have more time and energy to volunteer for causes you support if you choose to do so.

You can see all three of these points are right at the heart of the 10+ Fitness Minutes Challenge!

The “science of happiness” is now an emerging trend with many great things to offer. But, I can tell you from experience that if you follow this 10+ fitness minutes program, there’s an excellent chance that you won’t need a scientist to tell you that you are happy 😊.

Also, if you happen to be a parent, then you’ll likely pass on this gift of happiness to your kids. I know I’m trying to do this with my own two boys ages 11 and 8 (they are both doing their own 10+ fitness minutes streak). This is one of the best gifts you could pass on to your kids.

Healthy Leaders

As mentioned above, the foundation of this program is to integrate the best of health and fitness with the best of goal-setting, leadership, motivation, and behavioral psychology. When you follow this program, what happens is that you almost automatically turn into what we call a “Healthy Leader”.

A Healthy Leader is someone who is taking steps to improve their own life, and then also help others do the same. This can be anyone in your social network: family, friends, co-workers, community.

Importantly, you can start becoming a Healthy Leader on your very first day of this program. It’s hard to believe, but each of us – you included – has the power to change our own lives and then also change the lives of others. Sometimes all it takes is a single sentence of support to another person to turn that person around. Once you get a taste of helping other people, it almost becomes addictive and you want to do more.

I still remember accidentally sparking Pat, and then she sparked many other people. And who knows how many people those people sparked. Millions of people have already been sparked at SparkPeople. Imagine how many more people we could all spark by working together!

A justified benefit of helping others is that when you are motivating other people, this then increases the chances that you will stick to your program.

Three simple ways you can choose to be a Healthy Leader today are:

1. Start your 10+ Fitness Minutes Challenge
2. Share this mini-book for free with as many people as you can by emailing, posting to social media like Facebook, or even printing this out. [Note: please don’t do this step yet until the final designed version is finished 😊]
3. Look for simple opportunities to motivate people – you might find that it’s easier than you think!

Thanks a bunch for your help and support – we can do it!

How This Can Transform the USA and the World

As everyone knows, our society has many health challenges today, including:

- Obesity
- Diabetes/Pre-diabetes
- Inactivity/sedentary lifestyles
- Childhood obesity and health issues that might be dooming millions of kids to lifelong issues
- Many more

We strongly believe that all of these issues are not only a health challenge, but also a leadership challenge.

Imagine a world where there are millions of people using leadership to take control of their health...take control of their life...take control of their destiny.

- Parents will do a better job as parents
- Our children will have a better chance at a happy and healthy life
- Our companies will be more productive and a happier place to work
- We'll all be healthier, happier, and more energetic
- The USA could get back on the right track with many of the issues mentioned above

This is all truly do-able and we can all play a part in this as Healthy Leaders. After our 10 years of working with millions of people:

"We are **bold enough to believe we can change America,
but *humble* enough to know we need help—
continued help from our many millions of visitors...
and help from visionary leaders & organizations across America."**

A final word:

First, thanks so much for reading the beta-test version of this mini-book. I sincerely hope this will help you reach your most important goals in life. Please let me know if you have any thoughts or comments after reading this.

Testimonials

Add testimonials from SP members who have done streaks

Here are a few examples to start:

KEEPITSIMPLE_7/6/2014 3:32PM

Woo hoo! Great job! I love the 10 min streak, and end up moving much more. This is what challenged me to exercise and get off my butt 50 lbs ago, knowing it was ok to do just 10 min, and turned me from a couch potato to wanting to move. It's been 4 years, and I still do this, and more most days, at least 10 even if I don't feel good. I never thought I could do the activities I do today, and I look for every opportunity to keep moving. Thank you for this team!

Keep up the great job your doing. Sounds fun!



QUILTINGB527/22/2014 12:07AM

On a recent trip to the hospital...I asked the nurse if it would be possible to try to transfer into a chair. Once it happened, I got in my "chair marching" and she asked what was going on? Told her that being in the hospital is no

excuse to not continue my Spark marching and I got in 500 steps.

And you are so right! There are some days that 10 minutes is truly an effort to complete and others, I breeze by the 10 minute mark and keep on going.

LJCANNON 6/29/2014 8:05PM



Congratulations on your Streak!!



My 10 Minute A Day Walking Streak is at Day 1168



My Husband made it to Day 1111 before he had Emergency Surgery for Colon Cancer. He has started a New Streak while undergoing Chemo. He is at Day 29.

Additional Resources

Note: This section will be built out with a list of additional resources for readers and participants. Here is one starting topic to show how this program can apply to so many types of people:

How the 10+ Fitness Minutes Challenge Applies to Different Types of People

1. New exercisers – easing into a fitness program is the best approach for new exercisers
2. Busy people – anyone can find 10 minutes most days (or every day if you are doing a streak).
3. Advanced athletes – I was a fairly advanced athlete when I started this program, including captain of my high school soccer team, played near-college level tennis, etc. But this program helped me surpass any fitness level I had ever achieved. Advanced athletes can set goals related to consistency, meeting new challenges, using all areas of life beyond fitness, and more. This program can be as easy or challenging as you'd like it to be.
4. Yo-yo exercisers/dieters – this program is specifically designed to help participants stay consistent and on track and stop the yo-yo.
5. People who have trouble getting started – many people want to start a fitness program, but can't get around to it or think they have to go join a gym. This program shows that anyone can start right now at home in 10 minutes.
6. People who travel – travel is tough. I was on the road for nearly a month last year. I exercised every day without ever going to a gym by doing exercises like pushups, crunches, lunges, and stretching in my hotel room; doing jump rope, sprints, and running outside; and other fun activities. I love doing "fun scenic runs" on trips when I'm in good shape because this reinforces my program and adds great memories to trips.
7. Corporate employees – corporate life can be stressful and challenging. Getting up and taking quick exercise breaks from work is a great way to release stress. Doing this program over time will make you a dramatically better employee and likely lead to raises/promotions.
8. People who think they need to over-exercise – many people think it takes at least an hour to "count" as exercise. The research shows this isn't true.
9. Parents – particularly Moms – many Moms take care of themselves last. This is a recipe for poor results for the entire family. This program helps Moms take care of themselves first AND have more energy to help their family. It's a win/win. Dads too 😊.

10. Students (high school and college) – I really wish I had designed this program when I was a student. I would have had much more energy for fun activities beyond studying. This would also have helped me build much better study habits and better leadership skills.
11. Kids – fun and simple is a great combination to get kids started with exercise and goal-setting. My kids love their 10+ fitness minutes streak!
12. 50+ -- this is a great program for people age 50+. Even small amounts of exercise can make such a difference for people in this group to live healthy and be more mobile for a long time.
13. Weekend Warriors – going all-out on the weekend is a recipe for injury and otherwise not reaching your potential. Doing this program will lead to dramatically better results on the weekend

Note: add disclaimer about not doing this if you aren't cleared for fitness by your doctor