

Moving Because My Life Depends on It

Category: Exercise

written by Pamela Adelstein | July 7, 2021

As a child, I exercised in fits and spurts. A chubby girl, I was clumsy when I played sports. Pursuits of the mind took precedence over those of the body; often my nose was buried in a book.

As time passed, I exercised to be “healthy” – which meant trying to counteract my sluggish metabolism. Eventually, to spend time with my partner and friends, I learned new skills, such as cross-country skiing, backpacking, competing in sprint triathlons and running 5K and 10 K races. I even ran two half marathons. Despite all of this, I did not consider myself to be “athletic.” I felt that my activity was nothing special. Anyone could do it if they had enough determination.

As I got older, I began to enjoy moving my body for the sake of sport itself. I needed to sweat and feel my muscles stretch, heart pump, and adrenaline course through my veins. I began “acquiring” sports: swimming, kayaking, paddle boarding, cross country skiing, hiking, biking and yoga. I collected gear for each of these activities. Activity in nature became a core value for me and my family, as my husband and I deliberately took our kids hiking and camping to indoctrinate them into the outdoors.

Finally, I reached the point where I considered myself “athletic.” I savored the moment when my husband called me “intrepid” after we skied through a forest. I felt flattered and proud when a cyclist friend called me “badass.” That was who I had hoped to be. Anything but the awkward girl picked last for teams.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, my anxiety skyrocketed and I felt a strong need to be in motion. Stillness means sitting with my fears and worries. My yoga mat became as an oasis where I breathe and flow. Trail-running in the woods allows my thoughts to pass through me rather than grip my skin. When I swim across the lake I am gloriously alone with the puffy clouds and deep blue sky above and the murkiness below. Gliding through the water in my kayak, I leave my responsibilities back on land. Cycling on winding roads and rolling hills lets me outpace those tracking me down because they need me or want a piece of me which I do not have to give.

In the gym or in the great outdoors, I can feed my soul. For me, not exercising is not an option.

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