

The Walking Warrior

Category: Exercise

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | July 1, 2021

My natural inclination is to live a sedentary life—sitting on the rocking chair with a good book or lying on the couch for a two-hour nap. Even when I caved in to social pressure from friends and joined a gym, I limited my workouts to thirty minutes on an elliptical with little elevation and at low speed. I avoided the weight room at all costs, and due to my refusal to ever again wear a bathing suit in public, I also never took advantage of the Olympic-sized pool.

Then COVID-19, with its accompanying isolation, changed everything. Spending one lethargic day after another in my apartment began to wear me out—physically and emotionally. Therefore, I made the daring decision to begin each day with a walk. What started as a thirty-minute stroll accelerated to an hour of speed-walking. I either listen to Broadway music or talk to a friend as I make my way through the streets of my neighborhood or circle the hallways of my co-op when the weather does not permit me to go outside. I also spend time on my stationary bike (set at zero speed and level) when I read.

This exercise regimen has not only improved my physical strength, but it has also provided me with a mental escape, albeit a brief one, from the realities of the pandemic. For an hour, I feel free—no longer a caged bird stuck within a small living space. Whether I'm lost in my music or solving world problems with my friend, I have control over my thoughts; I am no longer a passive couch potato addicted to the negative 24/7 news of network television.

While exercise has not ended my aloneness and loneliness, it has given me a focus for each day. While it has not diminished my feelings of hopelessness, it has provided me with an hour of engagement either with the music I love or the friend I cherish. Walking every morning wakes up my body and my mind, reminding me that I can exercise control over what I do and think, even during a pandemic.

My walks always end where they began—in my apartment. However, the woman who left the apartment is not the same one who returns sixty minutes later. That woman feels energized and empowered, ready to conquer—or at least survive—another day.

Ronna Edelstein

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania