

John Sifferman's

H1Fit Launch Program



**5 Fitness Lessons to
Jump-Start Your Health
& Fitness Results**

Physical  **LIVING**

Copyright Notice

Copyright © John Sifferman, Physical Living 2017. All Rights Reserved.

You do not have the right to sell, resell, auction, share, give away, reprint or re-distribute this PDF file for any reason whatsoever. This copy of John Sifferman's H1Fit Launch Program is for your own personal use. No part of this file may be duplicated, reproduced or transmitted in any form whatsoever, without the expressed, written, and signed consent from the author, except for the inclusion of brief quotations as used in a review, critical article, or discussion group, in which full attribution to the author and source is required.

Disclaimer

This program is for educational and informative purposes only. The information contained in this file is not intended as medical or professional advice. Always consult your doctor before beginning any exercise program, diet, or another significant lifestyle change.

The author is not a medical doctor; the author is a fitness consultant. If you have a preexisting medical condition, known or unknown to you, such as an injury or pain that may or may not contraindicate exercise, please consult your health care team to address your special needs prior to beginning this program or any other exercise program.

While the information contained within this program is presented in good faith and believed to be accurate, results are not guaranteed, nor is any warranty given.

The author, publisher, and all persons or entities associated with or otherwise acting on behalf of them, shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any of the information contained in this program. The user assumes all risk for any injury, loss, or damage caused or alleged to be caused, directly or indirectly by using any information contained within this file. The user agrees to irrevocably and unconditionally release, acquit and forever discharge the aforementioned entities and persons from any and all claims, liabilities, promises, actions, damages and the like; past, present, or future - known or unknown. Use of the program, advice, and information contained in this product is at the sole choice and risk of the user.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....4
Lesson One: Your New Morning Fitness Routine.....5
Lesson Two: The 7 Key Components to a Successful Diet12
Lesson Three: How to Manage Stress Like a Champ.....17
Lesson Four: 5 Simple Exercises to Reverse the Damage from Sitting.....21
Lesson Five: 6 Practical Healthy Home Hacks.....32
About the Author.....36

Introduction

This H1Fit Launch Program is your quick-start guide to get on the path of radically transforming your body and your life through the power of health-first fitness, which is the *only* way to achieve and sustain a high level of fitness *and* health for a lifetime. There are five lessons, one for each day of the work week to help you jumpstart your success.

Now, if there's one thing I've learned since beginning the "fitness lifestyle" over 15 years ago, it's that you can't radically transform your body in just one week, or one month for that matter. Changing your body and your life takes time. Not to mention a lot of trial and error, and usually, many bouts of overcoming failure. So, think of this as the beginning of a long journey.

It's true that you can make good progress and set the stage for future, ongoing success in a very short period of time – and still have a life! And that's what this guide is all about – giving you some ideas, tips, and tools for improving your health and fitness not only this week, but for the long haul.

So, please don't just read this e-book. Commit *now* to apply something you learn from it. You'll be glad you did.

Sincerely,

John Sifferman
Health-First Fitness Coach
<http://PhysicalLiving.com>

Lesson One: Your New Morning Fitness Routine



Ask any successful athlete or fitness-minded person, and they'll probably tell you that what you do first thing in the morning will often make or break your success.

So, in this first lesson, I'm going to talk about the power of a morning routine, and share some of the things I do to kick-start my day, including some exercises I often perform first thing in the morning to get me focused and energized for the rest of the day.

The Power of a Consistent Morning Fitness Routine

I don't care if you're a morning person or not. A morning routine will do you a lot of good. It doesn't matter if you spring out of bed before your alarm clock goes off or if you hit the snooze button over and over again. **The first few minutes of your day – and to a lesser extent, the first few hours – really sets the tone for the rest of your day.**

Now, I've had various morning routines and rituals over my life, but over the past few years especially, I've figured out what works particularly well for me. And my new routine has made a big difference in my training, and my life, in general.

For example, I've noticed that **if I make bad decisions in the morning, that trend will probably continue throughout the rest of the day (e.g. more bad decisions)**. Or, if I start my morning on the defensive – always trying to play catch-up – or not having my A-game on, my whole day suffers as a result. **But on those days that I get my butt in gear right away, my whole day is much better for it.**

So, the main purpose of a morning routine is to:

- wake you up and get you energized for the day
- get you on a regular schedule as soon as you get up
- address some of the most important, but often over-looked, training needs that you have
- get your mind right so that you can dominate the rest of your day

And here's the thing: if you can win the first battle you face each and every day, which is getting out of bed when you're supposed to, you'll be much more likely to win the many other battle's you face throughout the rest of your day.

But even if you don't spring out of bed, you always have the opportunity to make a conscious choice to step up your game starting *right now*.

Okay, time to rock 'n' roll.

What Works For Me – John's Morning Routine

So, here is a basic blueprint that I've developed for my morning routine.

1) Drink a tall glass of water.

You have every reason in the world to drink plenty of pure water. And the absolute most critical time to do so is first thing in the morning when you're usually dehydrated. A tall glass of water will help re-hydrate and energize you, stoke your metabolism, detox your body and improve digestion, and may even help you lose weight, among many other things. So, this should be one of the very first things you do in the morning. And if you don't like plain old water, try tea instead. Or, add a slice of lemon, which comes with a whole other set of benefits.

And yes, you should *definitely* drink a tall glass of water before you have any coffee, a smoothie, or protein drink, (etc.) in the morning. Get some pure water in your system before you put anything else in.

2) Start with a quiet time.

I've found that if I don't take time for the important stuff first thing in the morning, I usually don't get around to it during the rest of the day. So, I try to start each day with a quiet time. I usually pray, listen, and remember the important things in life. For you, it could be something else like meditation or another silence practice, which would be invaluable even without a spiritual element. So, figure out what works for you. Just make sure that you're making time for what's important.

3) Do some guided journaling.

I've tried journaling a few times in the past, but it never stuck. And I'm still not much of a journaler. So, instead, I just ask myself some questions to get focused on the right things and get my mind prepared for the rest of the day. So, I guess that I think of it more as an opportunity to train myself than to "find myself."

I ask myself questions like:

- What am I grateful for today?
- What am I looking forward to doing today?
- What is my purpose and do my plans for today connect me to it?
- What are the most important things I have to accomplish today that will help me achieve my goals?
- Who can I serve or thank today?

I go through some other questions, too. And I got the idea from the excellent book [*The Way of the SEAL*](#), which helped me to systematize my morning routine.

This guided journaling helps me get better focus and clarity on making sure that my plan for the day is in alignment with my underlying goals and intentions. I also often find that I make changes to my plans for the day after checking in with these questions. It's just another "check and balance" for keeping me on track. For example, if I'm dreading my physical training plan for the day (which is pretty rare for me), I'll catch that first thing in the morning and deal with it.

4) Get energized with some morning exercise and movement.

Movement is medicine, and one of the best times to get a healthy dose is first thing in the morning. It'll wake you up, energize you, and improve your performance at practically everything else you do throughout the rest of your day.

For me, a self-proclaimed fitness guy, this is usually the most time-consuming chunk of my morning routine. It can last anywhere from 5 minutes to an hour, depending on what my plan calls for that day. Since I usually do my hard training later in the day, I usually perform my lower intensity exercise in the morning.

Now, almost *any* physical activity will be good here, but if you'd like my opinion on a darn-near ideal 4-step morning fitness routine, here's a basic template:

1) Start with some joint mobility exercises, and ideally, a quick full body routine that covers every major joint complex, with special emphasis on the areas that you need to focus on.

Note: here's a free program to get you started: [Intu-Flow Joint Mobility Program \(Beginner Level\)](#). You can also download [Recuper8](#), which is another great free program that goes a little deeper into the basics. Or, [Click Here](#) to see a 5 minute routine I filmed awhile back.

2) Perform some movement skill practice (e.g. MovNat, BodyFlow, TACGYM, Original Strength, Animal Flow, etc.).

Note: [Click here](#) to see a video of me practicing some Bodyflow and TACGYM in my living room. And here's a great free program I've used before: [MovNat Beginner Program](#).

3) Go for a brisk walk or a run, preferably outside and in nature, if possible. Pretty self-explanatory, but I've got loads of posts in the [running](#) and [barefoot](#) archives, if you'd like to learn more. Oh, and here's a free program if it's helpful: [John's Free Walking Program](#).

4) Finish with some yoga – focusing on the spine, hips, and any other trouble spots (optionally, you can pair yoga with breathing exercises, meditation, and/or visualization). You can see some of the lessons I've learned from doing yoga here: [5 Things I Wish I Knew Before I Started Yoga](#), which includes a couple of program recommendations. Or, you can just try this free follow-along program, which is a good basic routine for starting your day: [Sun Salutation 1](#).

Note: If you want to do ALL of your training in the morning, then plug your strength and conditioning in between steps 2 and 3.

So, that's a basic 4-step formula for the physical training. Of course, this may seem like a *ton* of work if you're not used to exercising in the morning. So, feel free to pick just one activity and start with 5-10 minutes a day. You can build gradually from there, if you'd like. The key is to *just do something* that will get you moving each morning.

5) Eat a delicious and nutritious breakfast that you'll love and will help you achieve your goals.

There are as many ways to eat as there are people. But I still think that for most people, breakfast is the most important meal of the day, especially if you're in the business of maximizing your performance in training and life.

Ideally, your first meal will be a balance of protein, carbs, and fats (and that's especially true if you train in the morning). A few great options that are more of the traditional breakfast foods would be...

- a) An omelet with vegetables ([click here](#) for one of my favorite recipes)
- b) Oatmeal with fruit, nuts or seeds (add protein powder, if you want)
- c) Sliced fruit in almond or coconut milk with sliced/crushed nuts on top – my favorite is sliced bananas, blueberries, and shaved almonds mixed together in a bowl of coconut milk.

And by this time, I've usually had two or three glasses of water. So, keep pushing the fluids all throughout your morning.

6) Review your goals and your plan for the day – making changes, as necessary.

This step is *critical*. If I miss this one, my whole day is a gamble.

Fortunately, most of the time, I plan my days ahead of time – usually at the end of each work day. So, most of the leg work is done in advance.

But what I need to do here is slow down from the hustle and bustle of the morning and take inventory of my plans for the day – even if it takes me an extra 15 minutes. This step is *always* worth the time, even when I'm running late.

So, I have a master to-do list on a pad of paper because I'm old school, and on it, I'll identify the most important things I need to accomplish that day, and prioritize all other tasks accordingly (I use an "A, B, C" system). And I mean everything from work tasks, to meals, to training stuff, to family stuff – it all goes on the list. Then I'll estimate how long each task will take (or decide how much time I will devote to it), and see if it all fits into one day. And if it doesn't, I simply cut the least important tasks to make time for the more important ones. Finally, I'll schedule every activity on my to-do list with a little extra time as a buffer (I usually need it!) – putting the most important tasks into time blocks. I also give myself hard deadlines within that day that I need to stick to (e.g. I must be done with work by 4pm so that I can train).

Oh, and I usually sip some green tea while doing this step. I'm all about that hydration thing. Can you tell?

Once my day is planned, prioritized, and scheduled down to the very last detail (including everything on *this* list), I'm pretty much ready to start with the "work stuff," but...

7) Immediately before starting your work day, do some box breathing and visualization work to gear up mentally.

This is the secret sauce. If I've done my due diligence with the previous steps – if I'm energized, fueled up, have got good goals and a solid plan to achieve them – and if I've got my mind set on the task ahead of me (i.e. having a rockin' day!), then this is what pushes me into turbo mode.

The box breathing is a very simple breathing exercise that is great stress reduction and relaxation technique, but it also helps to clear your mind and get a “blank slate” if you will. There are a lot of physical benefits, but I use it mostly for getting my mind ready for focused, deliberate action.

Here's how to do it...

- 1) Inhale through nose for 4 seconds to fill lungs completely, distending your belly forward like a balloon
- 2) Hold for 4 seconds without letting any air escape
- 3) Exhale through mouth for 4 seconds to purge air completely, pulling your belly in to your spine
- 4) Relax and hold for 4 seconds without letting any air in

Note: you can [Click Here](#) to watch a video where I walk you through the technique.

This can be done standing up, sitting down, or laying down (or tied up like a pretzel if you'd like), but remember that it's important to maintain good posture throughout the entire drill. And the most important thing you can remember is to breathe deeply into your belly to maximize your lung capacity every single breath.

I'll usually do it for 5 minutes, sometimes longer if I'm stressed out or have a lot on my mind. Regardless, I go somewhere that I won't be interrupted, set a timer and mentally set myself up for success for the rest of my day.

Note: you can learn more about the box breathing technique in my tutorial here: [How to Box Breathe](#).

Now, the visualization exercises can be done separately, but I usually combine it with box breathing. So, the visualization is the *true* mental gear-up. I'll usually visualize my goals, and see myself achieving them (or having already achieved them). I'll visualize myself succeeding, both today and in the future. I'll also imagine myself as my ideal future self. I'll recommit. I'll think about any challenges I may face during the day, and decide how I'm going to respond to them. I'll even rehearse my entire day going through each activity in my mind (this one has made a big difference for me). Basically, I just do

the mental work that I need to do to align my mind with my intentions, and the actions usually follow.

This is a *extremely* general summary, and there's a lot that goes into this (and I've only scratched the surface myself). But needless to say, this is something you'll have to practice. And you may not see the value in the beginning. You may even be tempted to save the 5 minutes and just get started with your day. Don't. Work at this a little bit each day, and I'm sure it'll have a positive impact as you get better at mentally preparing yourself for the day.

For me, it was probably a couple of weeks before I noticed a difference, but I trusted in the process and now I use this stuff daily (and not just during my morning routine), and it has helped tremendously.

Wrap-Up

So, that might seem like a lot to squeeze into one morning, and it is if you're not used to doing these things. So, I should note that I *gradually* made this my morning routine over the last year or so. And of course, there is some variance from day to day. And sometimes, I mix and match activities to save time. Plus, for me, anything goes on Sunday. I don't hold myself to strict training on Sundays, but I usually do some of my usual routine anyway.

All in all, my morning routine usually takes me between 20-60 minutes, which largely depends on how much time I spend on physical training first-thing in the morning. **But it all starts with the decision to get the ball rolling, drink a glass of water, have a quiet time, and start my journaling. I've found that if I get that far, the rest of my day will usually be awesome.**

One thing I've noticed is that I'm often tempted to skip some of my usual morning activities to save time or just get started with the "work stuff." But that's usually turned out to be a mistake. I've learned that for me, so much hinges on the consistency (that's a key word for us fitness folks) of following this blueprint as closely as I can each day. It truly sets the stage for a successful day, which is pretty important if you're seeking extraordinary health and fitness.

So, I'd encourage you to **come up with your own morning routine**. Use some of my ideas or just use some of your own. **What you do is not nearly as important as *actually doing something consistently each and every day*. It's the habit that's important.** Those little victories lead to big victories. So, make it happen this week, and start small if you need to. You'll be glad you did.

Lesson Two: The 7 Key Components of a Successful Diet

How to Eat Better Food, Improve Your Nutrition, and Still Have a Life



I read a great article by Nia Shanks on [The Diet That Has No Name](#). And while I was reading it, I realized...

Hey! I'm on the same diet! And mine doesn't have a name either!

And yet, it shares many similarities to what Nia does. Things like eating *real* food, covering a few of the nutrition basics most of the time (e.g. like protein and vegetables), being flexible and enjoying some of your favorite foods once in awhile. Simple stuff, really.

But it's worked for me, and I love my diet. It's delicious, nutritious, and easy to follow. And it is plenty effective in helping me achieve my goals like staying lean and strong (and including some of my "high performance" training) while still also *having a life*. And that's important to me!

And you know what? The more successful athletes and fitness folks that I've talked to, the more I've confirmed that most of them eat exactly like this! They don't follow the latest fads and trends. Instead, they stick with the *basics* of good nutrition, the things that are common denominators in every good diet.

What do all of the best diets have in common? Here are 7 things...

What are the underlying principles and strategies that create a successful diet (i.e. the ones that are evidence-based, research-backed, and real world tested)? And what are the common themes that all of the best diets share? What actually *works* across the board?

1) Eat real food most of the time.

It doesn't matter if you're following a Paleo, low-carb, vegetarian, or Mediterranean diet. Every single one of those diets – and every other *legitimate* diet, for that matter – is going to recommend that you focus on eating real, natural food as much as you can. In other words, they'll all recommend that you limit your intake of fake, unnatural, man-made, processed *junk food*, and instead focus on foods that come from natural sources (e.g. plants and animal products).

And you know why? Because it's a darn good idea! That's why.

So, eat things like fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, whole grains, beans, meat, fish, poultry, and wild game. And avoid unnatural, food-like substances most of the time.

You are what you eat. Garbage in, garbage out. So, if there are a ton of ingredients – or if you can't *pronounce* the ingredients – stay away from it. Or, like the late Jack LaLanne used to say, "if man made it, don't eat it." Or, at least don't eat too much (see points 5 & 6 below).

2) Eat a balanced diet that includes plenty of protein, carbohydrates, and fats.

Most people are *not* best-served by a highly-specialized or extreme diet (e.g. low carb, low fat, etc). Now, it's true that certain macro-nutrient ratios work better for certain people, and also for certain goals. For example, some people tend to do better with more carbs than others. But most people do best on a *balanced* diet.

So, if you notice that you tend to consume *a lot* of one food group (e.g. you often reach for seconds or thirds of starchy carbs), it might be worth exploring some changes. And the simplest method is usually to just bump up the foods that you aren't getting enough of. Your body will usually take care of the rest. It's good like that.

Note: you might need to do a food journal for a few days to know how much you're eating of each food group and/or macro-nutrient ratio for sure.

If you want to get really technical, Tom Venuto, who is an expert in nutrition and is the author of the excellent book, [Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle](#), will tell you that a macro-nutrient ratio of 50/30/20 works well for most people (i.e. carbs, protein, and fat, respectively). So, you can use that as a starting point. But I've known a lot who prefer more of a 40/30/30, too. So, it all depends on *you*, and that requires some trial and error on your part.

So, you can measure out your portions if you like, or just eyeball it like I do. Most of the time, I just make sure that there's a good balance of protein, carbs, and fat on my plate, and I try not to overeat any one type of food. Variety is key!

My underlying point is that if you run into any problems with your diet or fat loss progress (etc.), this is one of the first places I would look.

3) Eat lots of plants, and especially vegetables.

Michael Pollan got it right when he said, "Eat food, not too much, mostly plants" – *food* and *plants* being the key words there. So, if it's actually *food* (and not a food-like substance), and it *grew* on planet Earth, it's likely a very *nutrient-dense* food. Plus, most plant-foods have a very high nutrient to calorie ratio. That is, they're packed with nutrition, and yet, low in calories. Starches are an exception, and nuts and seeds are high in both! But hey, who's counting?

Suffice to say, plants are critical to a healthy diet. They come with so many benefits and play a very important role in health and fitness. That's why every major diet includes them as a pillar. So, it would be a major mistake to *not* include a lot of plants in your diet, and pretty much everyone should make them a high priority.

I'd put vegetables at the top of the totem pole, and leafy green veggies are some of the best of the bunch. Then I might put nuts, seeds, and fruit below the veggies. And finally, beans and starches would go beneath them. But they're all excellent sources of nutrition. And you should be eating them in good supply *daily*.

4) Make water your beverage of choice.

With very few exceptions, drinking things other than water is usually a bad idea for your health and fitness. But I get it. You have a life. And you're going to drink things like coffee, soda, and alcohol. You just need to *moderate* your intake of calorie-containing beverages.

So, for me, about 9 out of every 10 drinks I consume is water or green tea (note: sometimes, I'll add a slice of lemon/lime to my water or honey to my tea). The other 10% is mostly milk (cow milk, coconut milk, almond milk), but also some soda (usually specialty root beers) and even more rarely, alcohol (usually a nice dark rum).

So, I don't go out drinkin' every Friday night. I have a special drink for a special occasion. And Friday night isn't special enough! Or, if I've been working in the yard all day, chugging water like a champ, I might have a Virgil's root beer with dinner. Or, an apple cider if it's Fall. And if I need more calories, I might drink some milk or add it to a whole foods smoothie.

I just make sure that the vast majority of beverages I consume are water or other "healthier" options, and I don't worry too much about the other 10% of less-than-ideal beverages.

So, to summarize your beverage choices...

Best option for most of your daily consumption: water (occasionally with lemon, if you prefer)

Good options for certain purposes in moderation: coffee (black), tea, milk (lots of options in this category!)

Save for special occasions: alcohol, soda, juice, energy drinks

Note: I almost never drink juice (i.e. liquid sugar) and absolutely never drink energy drinks. And it's true, I don't actually drink coffee!

5) Accept that good enough is good enough.

If you're not an Olympic athlete, a member of special forces, or dealing with a major health crisis, you probably don't need an extremely strict, controlled diet. So, don't let perfection be the enemy of good enough.

It would be great if we could all eat 100% organic, natural, free-range, wild-caught, local (etc.) food *all the time*. But that's just not reality for most of us. Dietary perfection is an unrealistic expectation. And besides, the difference between eating 90% clean and 100% clean isn't all that much, and it won't really affect your results unless you're at the elite level. So, focus on the important stuff. And until you get the basics down and find what works for you, ignore the trivial details of dieting.

And it sounds like common sense, I know. But it's not so common. Most people focus their attention on trivial details of their diet instead of taking care of the big important issues. They think that adding kelp to their diet, taking a special supplement, or trying a new smoothie recipe will solve all of their health and diet woes. But they're kidding themselves.

For me, I have a goal of eating well about 90% of the time. For the other 10%, anything goes. And that works well for me. And honestly, most people could achieve their goals and be really happy with their results from a diet that is roughly 80% "clean."

I don't even like using that word, "clean." It's not like pizza and ice cream and potato chips are *dirty*. They're just not the healthiest options and can cause problems when you eat too much of them.

6) Have a life.

Enjoy some of your favorite foods once in awhile. Don't be dogmatic about your diet unless you have an important reason to be (e.g. health-related or ethics-related). Don't avoid "naughty" foods or demonize entire food groups because some guru said they're bad. Be flexible. Go ahead and eat that treat when the opportunity arises. Buck the trend and actually eat with your family. Pig out on Thanksgiving if you want. Put butter on it.

7) Make changes to your diet gradually.

When people find out that I'm a fitness pro and ask me what kind of diet I follow, I have to explain that I don't *do* diets. I've tried different methods of eating, sure. And I like things about certain diets. But diets aren't in my repertoire of tools because *diets almost never work*.

Here's what does: [baby steps](#) that lead you to your own unique and ideal diet. And that takes time, effort, and even practice. It's not something you can figure out in 30 days, 6 weeks, or even a year, despite what the diet gurus would like to sell you *cough* ...tell you. It's a *process*. You have to gradually change your habits over a period of months and years.

I'd estimate that with focus, discipline, and guidance, most people can master their diet in 1-2 years. That's the *accelerated* pace, by the way. So, if you want to succeed with all this diet stuff, you'd better get used to the idea of training for the long haul, instead of constantly reaching for the short-term, temporary, low-hanging fruit.

So, now that you know what works, what's the best way to get started?

With one small step at a time. And I'd recommend that you make it a brain-dead simple and ridiculously *easy* step so that you have no excuse not to succeed. Here are a couple of ways you can approach it:

- Focus on one habit at a time like drinking more water, eating more vegetables, or adding more healthy fats. Spend at least two weeks devoted to mastering this one habit, and once you've got it down, pick another one to work on. That's a basic blueprint for success, right there.
- Focus on one meal at a time. If your dinners are usually A-OK, but your breakfast needs work, spend a month working on eating better breakfasts (this is also Nia's suggestion, by the way).

Regardless of what you do, make a *decision*, and then make it happen!

Lesson 3: How to Manage Stress Like a Champ



Stressed out most of the time? Yeah. You and everyone else. And most people don't have even the slightest clue on how to *effectively* manage their stress in a healthy and positive way. Or, they just don't want to deal with it. And can you blame them? They're too stressed out!

Unfortunately, it seems like the knee-jerk reaction to stress is to “manage it” with things that don't work at all. Things like...

1. Ignoring the problem or hiding from it, and powering through life anyway.
2. Eating or drinking away your problems (e.g. food, alcohol, caffeine, etc.).
3. Distracting yourself with entertainment or an addiction (e.g. TV, Internet, smoking, drugs, etc.).

And while some of those things may *seem* to help, they usually make things worse over the long haul.

So, here are five *better* stress management strategies that are simple, easy, and have been *proven* to work.

5 of the Most Effective Stress Management Strategies

There are many ways to manage stress. Here are some of the most effective solutions...

1) Get your mind right.

Depending on your situation, you may need to get *out* of your head. Or, it might be better if you get *INTO* your head to figure out what's causing the stress. Try to figure out what the root of the problem is. Name it. Describe it. And figure out the best way to deal with it. Regardless, acknowledge that you can't control everything, and then focus on what you can control, like how you *respond* to stress. Don't wait until you hit rock bottom before doing something about it.

Also, stay positive and pay attention to the good things in your life. Look for them. They are there! Ask yourself each day what you're grateful for – even if it's as simple as food, shelter, or high-speed internet. Find someone who will listen. Try a silence practice to learn how to witness your thoughts. Visualize yourself overcoming your challenges. Or, do some journaling if it's helpful.

The more that you can get your mind on your side, the better for your health and quality of life.

2) Take care of your body.

When you're stressed out, the last thing you're probably thinking about is getting plenty of exercise, eating a healthy diet, and sleeping enough. But this is what you need more than ever.

Stress wears you down mentally, emotionally, and physically. That's why it's important to counteract the negative stress with positive stress. And one of the absolute best ways to do that is to get moving! Almost any physical activity will help, and some of the best stress-reducing options would be:

- Going for a walk or easy run, especially in a natural environment (e.g. hiking or trail running).
- Any form of mindful movement that requires you to focus such as yoga, tai chi, martial arts, or dance.
- Any form of recreation, sport, or physical activity that you *enjoy*.

Need more ideas? Here are [100 ways to disguise exercise](#).

Note: Make sure you're not doing too much exercise that will add to your overall stress load. So, if you're extremely or chronically stressed out, you should probably avoid high intensity exercise for the time being (e.g. no crazy Crossfit WODs on top of your already stressed out self). But most low and moderate intensity forms of physical activity will be helpful.

Even a few minutes of physical activity will go a long way, and the more fun, engaging, and invigorating, the better. So, just do the best you can – even if it's only for 5 minutes a day. Set a small goal to stick with every day, and make time for yourself.

3) Add more nature to your life.

Our body's were designed to thrive in a natural environment. And when we're removed from that natural environment, not only does that stress us out in-and-of-itself, it also makes it harder for us to manage stress when it does come upon us.

Fortunately, time and time again, exposure to nature has been shown to lower stress and revitalize the body – even for people who live in a high-tech, concrete jungle. It's like a miracle drug with no side effects.

The easiest way to get started with this is to simply get some fresh air and sunlight (e.g. vitamin D). You could also go to a park, do some hiking, or any other outdoorsy activity. Even surrounding yourself with plants and looking at a picture of a natural landscape has been shown to lower stress levels.

But by far, spending time outdoors in nature with no other cares in the world is the best option there is. If a weekend camping or backpacking trip is out of the question, consider a day hike, half day hike, or just an hour or two at the park when you get a chance. Carve out some time in your schedule and block it off for this. It'll do your body and your mind good.

4) Get your life in order.

Maybe you're thinking...

That's easy for YOU to say.

And I can't blame you for feeling that way. But there are many simple choices, changes, and habits that are quick and easy to implement that can make a big difference.

You can start by simply doing *less*. Cut out the non-essentials. Learn how to manage your time. Protect your time. Reevaluate your priorities. Set some personal boundaries. Practice saying "no." Silence your phone. Turn off the news.

Spend more time with the people you love, and doing the things you love. Reach out to an old friend. Play with your pets. Listen to your favorite music. Turn it up. Dance like nobody's watching. Work in your yard. Read a good book. Do something just for fun. Stop trying to be perfect.

And most importantly, always be asking yourself if your daily actions are leading you to your goals. Is your day-to-day life in line with your purpose, values, and priorities? Are you focusing on the right stuff?

Difficult times are a great opportunity to reevaluate all of this life stuff.

5) Learn how to rest and relax.

You need to learn how to rest, and especially how to *sleep* – deeply and peacefully. This guide will teach you how: [**The Definitive Guide to Sleeping Like a Baby Every Single Night: 20 Tips to Troubleshoot Your Sleep so that you can Spring out of Bed Each Morning Ready to Dominate Your Day \(a No-Nonsense, Step-by-Step Guide on Sleeping Well\).**](#)

Apart from sleep, you should also look into the many different breathing exercises like [**box breathing**](#), which works like a charm for instantly reducing stress. It's one of my go-to strategies, and I use it almost daily – even when I'm not feeling stressed out. There's also prayer, meditation, visualization, and many others. Some of these are often best when combined with yoga, tai chi, qigong, or other gentle exercise. So, pick one or two areas that interest you and devote some time to learning and practicing them daily.

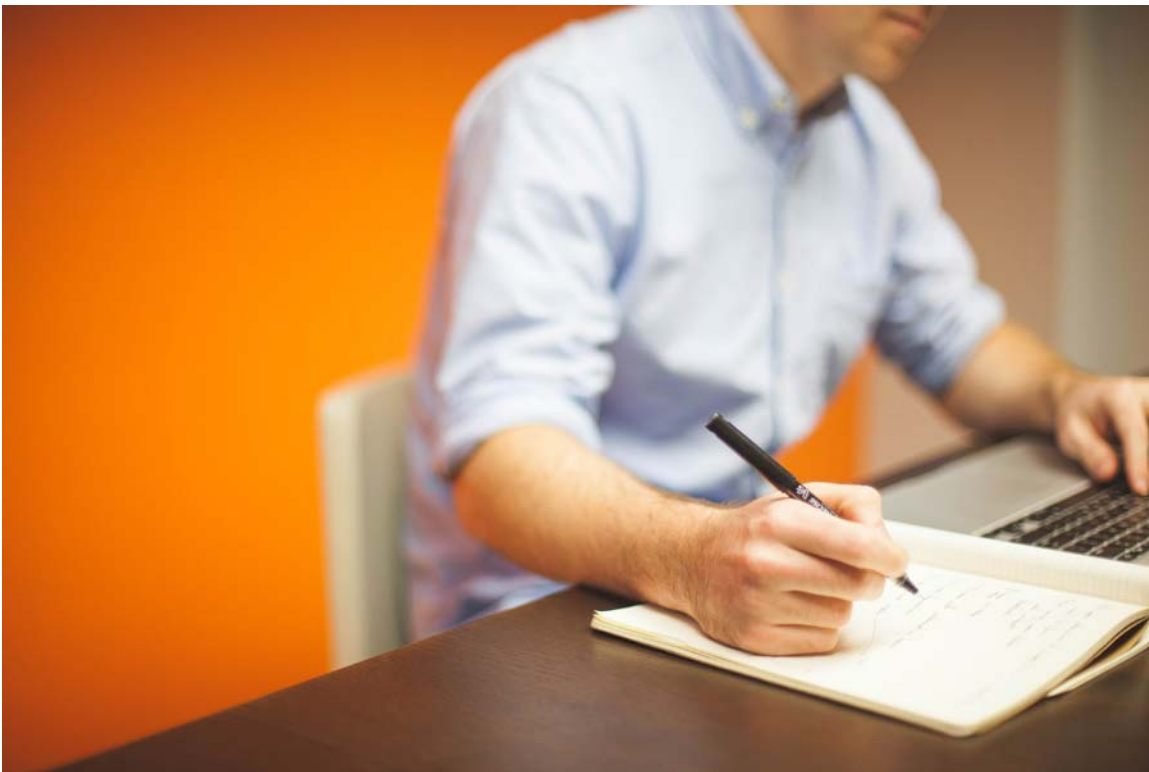
Finally, attack the stress directly by doing something relaxing at least once a week like taking a bath, getting a massage, sitting in the sauna or a hot tub, or just savoring your favorite hot drink. Treat yourself. Just make sure that this doesn't take the place of the other important strategies on this list.

Wrap-Up

If you learn and apply some of these strategies, you'll have a "toolbox" for whenever stress creeps up on you. And you'll be much better off using *these* tools than almost anything else.

Lesson Four: 5 Simple Exercises to Reverse the Damage from Sitting in Only 5 Minutes a Day

5 Unconventional Exercises to Counter-Act the Negative Effects of Excessive Sitting and Get Un-chair Shaped (a Simple, Step-by-Step Exercise Routine for all Skill Levels)



By now, I hope we all know that sitting for extended periods of time is really bad for us health-wise. Excessive sitting wreaks havoc on our health, mobility, and basic functionality, among other things.

Basically, the more that we sit, the more that our body adapts to sitting. But we weren't designed to sit! We were made to *move* – to walk, run, jump, climb, crawl, fight, lift and carry things, along with many other wonderful activities. Unfortunately, many of us can't get around the fact that we have to sit for prolonged periods of time, whether it's at work, a long commute, or stuck in an airplane (aisle seat, please!).

So, what do we do about it?

Well, there are *many things* that we can and should do to counter-act the negative effects of excessive sitting, and **one of the first things you should try is some targeted exercises that are designed to compensate for the over-specializations that happen to our body's when we sit all the time.**

So, in this post, I'm going to share five of the best exercises for reversing the damage from sitting. But let's get one thing straight. If you sit down *way too much*, **a handful of exercises isn't going to completely undo all of the damage caused by sitting. What you really need to do is sit less and move more. But this quick routine is a good start that will help immensely.** You'll be surprised how much better you feel after your first time through the exercises. And if you keep it up for a few weeks or longer, it will definitely improve your health, mobility, basic functionality, and posture, among other things. It might even get rid of that back pain for you.

Note: I've broken each exercise down into three difficulty levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. So, there are actually fifteen exercises to choose from. I suggest choosing one from each group and stick with it until you feel like you need something more challenging. But feel free to experiment with any and all of them.

Exercise 1 – Shinbox Switch

This first exercise series is best taught via video. So, I whipped one up for you here: [The Shinbox Switch Exercise](#).

Level 1 (beginner): Windshield Wiper

Level 2 (intermediate): Shinbox Switch with or without hand assist

Level 3 (advanced): Shinbox Switch with full hip extension

Exercise 2 – Shoulder Bridge

Level 1 (beginner): Standing Shoulder Bridge – Standing tall, shrug your shoulders up and back – clasping your hands together. Squeeze your triceps to lock your elbows, and pack your shoulders down. Lift your head away from your shoulders and tuck your tailbone underneath. Hold for 20-60 seconds.



Level 2 (intermediate): Laying Shoulder Bridge – Lay down on your back with knees bent and feet firmly planted on the ground. Squeeze your shoulder blades together with arms extended toward your ankles, and lift your hips, driving from a mid-foot balance. Tuck your tailbone, press your hips upward, and squeeze your knees together. Relax your head and neck. Hold for 20-60 seconds.



Level 3 (advanced): Clasped-hands Shoulder Bridge – Assume the same position as above, except clasp your hands together, and squeeze your triceps to keep your elbows locked. Hold for 20-60 seconds.



Exercise 3 – Downward Facing Dog

Level 1 (beginner): down dog with hands on an elevated surface (like wall, bench, furniture, etc) – With feet about shoulder-width apart, bend forward and place your hands on an elevated surface. Lock your elbows, pack your shoulders, and lock your knees. Keep your head and neck relaxed in the neutral position. Lift your tailbone toward the sky. Hold for 20-60 seconds.



Level 2 (intermediate): down dog on floor with feet spread out – Assume the same position as above, except your hands are pressing into the floor. Try to keep your heels flat. Hold for 20-60 seconds.



Level 3 (advanced): down dog on floor with feet close together – Assume the same position as above, except bring your feet closer together. Hold for 20-60 seconds.



Exercise 4 – Seated Spinal Twist

Level 1 (beginner): Seated Spinal Twist with leg extended – Sitting on the floor with both legs extended, bend one knee and hug it closely to your opposite shoulder – making sure to keep your sits bone down on the floor (i.e. your bum). Lift with the crown of your head to maintain your posture. Hold for 20-60 seconds.



Level 2 (intermediate): Seated Spinal Twist with leg pulled in – Assume the same position as above, except also bend your extended knee and place your heel by your bum. Then place your rear hand behind you for balance and twist gently to the that side – making sure to maintain your posture, and trying to get your ribs off of your thigh. Counterpoint your knee going across your chest with your sits bone staying down. Hold for 20-60 seconds.



Level 3 (advanced): Full Seated Spinal Twist – Assume the same position as above, except twist much more, using both arms to lever yourself into a deeper spinal twist position. Hold for 20-60 seconds.



Exercise 5 – Pigeon Pose

Level 1 (beginner): Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch & Piriformis Stretch on back (do both)

Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch – From a one-legged kneeling position, with hips squared and both knees at a 90 degree angle, tuck your tailbone underneath until you feel a stretch on the front of your hip. Hold for 20-60 seconds and repeat on the opposite side.



Piriformis Stretch on back – Laying on your back, cross one ankle over your opposite knee, and hug both legs in toward your chest by pulling on the outside knee. Hold for 20-60 seconds and repeat on the opposite side.



Level 2 (intermediate): Pigeon Pose w/ hand support – From a kneeling position, place your hands down in front of you and extend one leg backwards with knee locked and toes pointed. Pressing your hands into the floor, try to turn that same side hip down toward the floor, and counterpoint it by reaching your opposite sits bone down to the ground (i.e. get your bum low) – with your knee bent, and leg resting on the outside of your shin and thigh. Hold for 20-60 seconds and repeat on the opposite side.



Level 3 (advanced): Pigeon Pose without hand support & with forward fold (do both)

Pigeon pose without hand support – Assume the same position as above, except remove your hands for support. Hold for 20-60 seconds and repeat on the opposite side.



Pigeon pose with a forward fold – Assume the same position as above, and then fold forward at the hips, reaching your arms overhead and trying to get belly to thigh contact. Hold for 20-60 seconds and repeat on the opposite side.



Notes:

- These exercises are perfect after a long day of work, a commute, a flight, or while you're watching TV.
- Perform at least one exercise from each category for up to a minute in a circuit fashion (one exercise after the other).
- You can go through the circuit up to three times for additional benefit.
- Focus on going right to your edge, and no further – never forcing a range of motion. And gradually try to get deeper into each pose with every breath.
- Exhale through discomfort.
- For additional benefits, finish the routine with a few minutes of deep breathing in corpse pose (aka dead mans pose).

Wrap-up

Taking five minutes a day to practice these exercises will help you decrease aches and pains, lower your risk of injury, increase your energy levels, improve your posture, and even get stronger, among other things.

Now, these exercises will make a big difference, but please keep your expectations grounded in reality. This is a quick-fix solution that will definitely do your body good, and will be well-worth the time and effort invested. But these exercises are not a *cure*. Taking five *minutes* out of your day to focus on some targeted exercises to reverse the effects of sitting for HOURS every day is merely damage control. And it's darn good damage control, if you ask me. But I'm no miracle worker.

Now, a better and more comprehensive approach would attack the *root of the problem* (i.e. being sedentary) from all angles and would likely include some lifestyle changes.

Lesson Five: 6 Practical Healthy Home Hacks



For most of us, our home is our primary *habitat*. It's where we spend the lion's share of our time (even if we are asleep for much of it). So, what are the best bang-for-your-buck investments for creating a healthier home environment?

Well, some of the things we've done in our home include changing our lights, getting black-out shades for our windows, using a standing desk, installing blue-blocking software on our computers and phones, switching to glass for food storage instead of plastics, getting some houseplants, and using more natural cosmetic and cleaning products (e.g. soap, vinegar), among many other things.

I've since learned that there's so much more that can be done to boost the health of your home – whether you're living in the city, country, a house, or an apartment. Just beware that this is one of those areas where the rabbit hole goes very deep. You could easily spend thousands of dollars just covering some of the basics. And tens of thousands of dollars if you wanted to be *thorough*. And there are also a lot of gimmicks out there that rely on shady science or no science to promote their products.

But today, I want to focus on some healthy home hacks that are:

- reasonable & sensible
- low cost (or at least have low-cost options)
- high yield in benefits

In other words, the *practical* stuff that most people can implement without too much difficulty. These are some of the things that I think should be a high priority for most homes.

1) Optimize Your Lighting and Limit Artificial Light Exposure.

Perhaps the simplest, least expensive, and biggest bang-for-your-buck healthy home hack is to change the lighting in your home. And more importantly than that, start treating your lighting differently when you're at home.

Artificial light wreaks havoc on our biological clock, especially after sunset. Blue light, in particular, screws up all kinds of things when it's dark outside. Fortunately, there are many easy things we can do to limit the negative effects of artificial light, and one of the simplest things is to install blue light blocking software on your smart phones, tablets, and computers (there may even be apps available for some TVs). Get "f.lux" for your computers and "Twilight" for your smart phone.

From there, the most important thing you can do is to darken your bedroom completely. I'm talking pitch black like a cave. Keep your lights off, turn off your night lights, and use blackout shades or curtains (aluminum foil or cardboard can serve as an inexpensive substitute). We even covered the little green light on our smoke detector to reduce the light it emits (we can still see if it's lit when we look really closely). I recommend that you do a light inventory tonight before going to bed. If it's not pitch black in your room when you go to bed, figure out where the light is coming from and *kill it*.

We've actually done the same thing between our bedroom and the bathroom. All lights in the vicinity are turned *off*, and all little lights that *can't* be turned off have been covered up – often with tiny strips of black electrical tape. You can also get special [light bulbs that don't emit blue light](#). And when all else fails, a quality [sleep mask](#) may do just the trick.

Apart from that, you'll want to do everything in your power to limit your exposure to artificial light after sunset, and especially as you get closer to bedtime. You can do this by...

- keeping unnecessary lights turned off and using dimmers if you have them
- using candles
- covering up all of those little lights that tell us our electronics are *off*
- wearing these [cool-dude sunglasses](#), which are designed to block blue light so that you can sleep better at night.

Thinking differently about lighting and making a few key changes can go a long way toward helping you sleep better at night. And we all know [how important sleep is](#), don't we?

2) Filter or purify your water, if necessary.

Whether your water comes from a well or a public water supply, if it's contaminated, that's bad news for your health. Unfortunately, most municipal water contains all kinds of nasty things you wouldn't want to drink. So, it's money well-spent to get a water filtration or purification system in place for your home.

We've been on well water for the past several years. After having our water tested, we decided to get a **Royal Berkey Water Filter** (note: we didn't need the fluoride filters), which is what we use for all of our drinking water. The smaller [Britta filter](#) that we used to use wasn't large enough or fast enough for us anymore. And after a little research, I learned that the Berkey would filter out a much wider range of bad stuff, while keeping the *good stuff*. Plus, over a few years, it would eventually save money over the expensive and quickly used up Britta filters.

Another sensible option would be to install a special showerhead filter to catch some of the nasties before it's absorbed by your skin. We used this [Berkey showerhead filter](#) at our last home. There are tons of different models available, and the one you should get depends on what's in your water.

Apart from that, you could also consider a whole house system like reverse osmosis. But then you're talking about spending some money, and you'll want to do your own research to weigh all of the options based on your needs.

3) Start switching over to natural personal care and cosmetic products.

If you rub it on your skin, or otherwise use it on your body (e.g. soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, makeup etc.), it should be as natural as possible. So, if there's a long list of ingredients or if you can't pronounce some of their names, it's probably not the healthiest product to be using. A good rule of thumb is that if you can't *eat it*, you probably shouldn't use it.

Nowadays, there are plenty of all natural (or mostly natural) cosmetic and personal care products, and inexpensive options can be found if you shop around. We're partial to [Burt's Bees](#) and [Tom's of Maine](#), among a few others. And in many cases, it's really not that hard to make your own. My wife makes all of our soap, deodorant, lip balm, lotions, salves, and all kinds of crazy stuff. She even made me a couple different kinds of beard oil. We actually save a lot of money this way.

This is one of the more difficult changes on this list since most of us have grown accustomed to using certain products. Not to mention that we all have our favorite

toothpaste, and there is a certain level of brand loyalty involved, too. So, I suggest starting with just one thing at a time, and I think soap is a wise first option.

4) Use glass containers for food storage.

Another very simple change would be to simply replace all of your plastic food storage containers (e.g. Tupperware) with glass. Plastics and other materials can and do leech carcinogens into our food, which we then eat. And we all know how that ends, don't we? Glass doesn't have this problem. And given that roughly one out of every two men, and one out of every three women will get some kind of cancer in their lifetime, this is a smart, small step towards reducing your risk.

Since we do some of our own canning, we use [Mason jars](#) like it's nobody's business. But any other [glass storage containers](#) will do the trick.

5) Start transitioning to natural cleaning products.

Similar to personal care products, the things we use to clean our homes effect our health – and usually not in a good way. Most people liberally douse their floors, countertops, and other surfaces with all kinds of hazardous chemicals. Fortunately, soap and water can handle most issues. Plus, common household items like vinegar, baking soda, borax, and even salt can be used for multiple cleaning applications. And these things don't come with multiple health warnings on the label.

Of course, you could just buy cleaning supplies by companies like [Seventh Generation](#), which is available in most stores. You'll pay a little more, and some brands are definitely better than others (e.g. some Seventh Generation products aren't all that different from conventional cleaning supplies). So, you do need to read labels.

Also, we are big fans of [Charlie's Soap](#) for our laundry detergent. And with all the Siffer-kids running around these days, we buy it in mega-bulk.

6) Get a Squatty Potty.

OK, Okay! You got me. This one isn't necessarily a *high-priority* healthy home hack. But I've been using a [Squatty Potty](#) for years, and I think it's a great excuse to get some more squat time during your day.

I'm all about integrating movement into our normal day-to-day activities (e.g. [5 Fitness Hacks to Get Fit While Brushing Your Teeth](#)), and this is a simple way to do that.

Wrap-Up

Gradually improving your habitat (i.e. your home) is a never-ending challenge, but a little bit of effort and well-chosen hacks can go a long way. Remember that this is a *process*. You don't have to completely overhaul your home in one fell swoop.

Closing Thoughts

Thank you for reading my H1Fit Launch Program. I hope it was helpful for you, and I hope you *apply* some of what you learned and begin to experience the amazing transformative benefits of health-first fitness.

Sincerely,

John Sifferman
Health-First Fitness Coach

About The Author

John Sifferman is a health-first fitness coach who has been teaching, training, and coaching people since 2006 when he was first certified as a personal trainer through the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA-CPT).

Since then, John has worked in many different roles to help people transform their lives through fitness. He has written over 600 articles about health and fitness, and has been featured in Shape magazine, RMAX International magazine, Faith and Fitness Magazine, and on dozens of websites including Lifehacker, Burn The Fat Inner Circle, Fit Watch, Critical Bench, Strength Running, Fitness and Power, and Conditioning Research, among others.



John is also the creator of [The Pull-up Solution](http://ThePullupSolution.com), which is a step-by-step pull-up and chin-up training system that helps people rapidly increase their pull-up numbers in three months or less. You can learn how John rapidly increased his pull-up numbers and has helped thousands of people do the same with his unique approach to pull-up training at the official site here: <http://ThePullupSolution.com>.

John lives with his wife, children and akita dog in beautiful New Hampshire. You can get to know his down-to-earth personality and sense of humor at his website <http://PhysicalLiving.com>, where he writes about health-first fitness and physical culture.

You can also follow him on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Youtube](#).