Smarts and Stamina
The Busy Person’s Guide to Optimal Health and Performance

Marie-Josée Shaar, MAPP, CPT
Kathryn Britton, MAPP

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Acclaim for *Smarts and Stamina*

“In *Smarts and Stamina*, Shaar and Britton have packed a large amount of information into a lively, engaging, and informative workbook. The easy-to-read method is sure to sustain you through the process of increased well-being. Grounded in cutting edge research, their upbeat and practical style invites you to build on your strengths as you support your own best habits of sleep, food, mood, and exercise. Learn, celebrate, and grow!”

~Dr. Kate F. Hays, Ph.D., C.Psych., CC-AASP, Former President, Division of Exercise & Sport Psychology, American Psychological Association

“Go ahead, dive into this book. You will look at vegetables, your computer, and your to-do list in a new way after taking on the perspective of *Smarts and Stamina*. Using the latest in scientific research, Marie-Josée and Kathryn give you actionable steps to attack your weaknesses from a point of strength. You will have fun and make changes by reading this book, and that’s a rare joint result.”

~Senia Maymin, MAPP, Editor-in-Chief, Positive Psychology News Daily

“Have you ever wanted to scream at the next person who tells you what you “should” do in order to reach a personal wellness goal? *Smarts and Stamina* (SaS) takes a different approach—one that’s non-judgmental, grounded in the science of what works and is all about learning along the way. There are no wrong turns on the SaS journey. The focus is on what you will do, not what you won’t. Halleluiah! SaS works because YOU get to be involved. The workbook is meant only to be your guide. Authors Shaar and Britton help the reader understand the importance of how interconnected our energy is to everything; from our environment to how much sleep and exercise we get, to where our attention is focused. SaS is more effective that a single goal approach such as starting a diet or tackling an exercise resolution because the SaS approach underlines the importance of making both a lifestyle change AND a mindset shift. The first step is simply to say yes. As you follow YOUR instincts as they emerge on the pages of SaS, it becomes clear change is in the midst. I promise just owning this book will make you feel better.”

~Amy Tardio, Huffington Post contributor, Professional Wellness Coach. Former Fitness Editor, *GQ* and Fitness Director, *SELF, Vogue*, and *Glamour* magazines.

“This book offers a fresh approach to living a high-quality and flourishing life, and ought to be on the bookshelves of anyone who wants a smart, evidence-based workbook that will walk you through every part of your daily life and show you how to challenge and improve your habits.”

~Caroline Adams Miller, MAPP, Author of *Creating Your Best Life*

“I strongly recommend anyone in my profession to start selling this book for fear of being out of a job otherwise.”

~Loc N. Dao, Registered Pharmacist, MBA

“Chock full of humor, stories, science, and just plain good sense, this book has a light touch and a weighty message. Low on stamina for change? Use your smarts and team up with Marie-Josée Shaar and Kathryn Britton, who have written an astonishingly powerful book to help make real change as easy as it can get.”

~James Pawelski, PhD, Director of Education, Positive Psychology Center, University of Pennsylvania; Founding Executive Director, *International Positive Psychology Association*
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**First Things First**

“Be the change you wish to see in the World.”
~Gandhi

When it comes to maintaining good health, most of us know the basics. We are aware that each day, we should eat between 7 and 13 servings of fruits and vegetables, exercise at least thirty minutes, sleep 7 to 8 hours, and even focus on the positives rather than dwelling on the negatives.

While over 80% of the American population has a highly developed fitness consciousness, America is currently plagued with 4 simultaneous epidemics, and the rest of the world is rapidly catching up:

- **An epidemic of sleep deprivation**
  More than 2 out of 3 adults do not get their minimal daily requirements.

- **An epidemic of obesity**
  We are the very first society in history to be overfed and undernourished, with more than 2 out of 3 adults being overweight or obese.

- **An epidemic of stress, anxiety, and depression**
  The average age for first depression is now 14 years old.

- **An epidemic of physical inactivity**
  Fewer than 20% of adults reap the benefits of physical activity.

As wellness professionals, we started to look into the clear correlations linking these four epidemics. For example, research shows that people who are sleep deprived are more likely to be overweight. Lack of sleep is also a strong predictor of higher stress and anxiety. High stress can then lead to emotional eating, which contributes to the epidemic of obesity.

We then started to look for sustainable ways to make things better. And here’s the good news: just as these epidemics are interrelated, so are their solutions. Physical activity is a recognized stress-reducer that contributes to good sleep. More sleep curbs food cravings and maintains positive emotions. Stronger emotional health also contributes to more and better quality sleep.

Our sleep, food, mood, and exercise habits are not only connected through our subjective experience, but also through the biochemical reactions that they create in our brains and bodies. For example, it is not only because we feel happy that we can better resist our favorite bag of chips. It is because feeling happy triggers the production of serotonin, which helps us regulate our responses to various stimuli.

The developed world is in a downward spiral due to poor sleep, food, mood, and exercise skills. By picking up this book, you have already taken a giant step towards reversing the trend.
Let’s start on a positive note. No matter what you did in the past and no matter what your mother, brother, neighbor, or ex-insignificant other ever said, you are not doomed to a lifetime of poor health habits.

This book can be the beginning of a fresh new chapter in your life. Coming from a background in positive psychology, we aren’t very interested in exploring anyone’s past failures to change behavior or what childhood trauma may have caused them. What we want to explore instead is what does work. When are you at your best, and how can you be at your best more often?

Right out of the gates, we want you to know that your health challenges don’t necessarily result from a lack of self-discipline—at least not entirely. A lot is due to culture and socialization. In America, we are taught to take pride in working long hours, we brag about being busy, we seek ever-faster ways of doing everything, and we easily forget that patience is a virtue. Our roadrunner culture has normalized expressions like “no time to breathe,” which leaves no room for self-care. In fact, self-care is now seen as a wasteful, even shameful indulgence.

But whether we like it or not, we need self-care in our lives. When we skimp on it, we tend to compensate (even overcompensate!) somewhere else. As a result, behaviors such as overeating have become socially acceptable, if not overtly encouraged. Adding to the challenge, the foods that are most convenient and most easily available are loaded with villains such as salt or high fructose corn syrup, making it that much harder to maintain healthy habits. We’re pretty discerning eaters, yet we were truly shocked when we researched some of the nutritional content of a few meals we used to enjoy in large chain restaurants. So you see, our culture contributes to our health issues in many ways.

That’s not to say that we shouldn’t take responsibility for making the situation better. Quite the contrary, each and every one of us is an active part of that culture, not a victim of it. As such, we have all the power we are willing to claim to change it, starting with ourselves.

Yes, we have to start with ourselves. Think about that for a minute: if you don’t treat yourself as if you matter, who will? If you don’t invest in yourself, why should your spouse, your friends, your boss, or your co-workers?

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1 Throughout the book, certain points that we want to stress are marked like this to draw them to your particular attention.
Let’s Get Started

So let us ask you: what is your reason for committing to healthier habits? What will keep you going, when the going gets tough? Do you want to teach your kids about good health and lead by example? Are you an entrepreneur whose business is too meaningful to settle for a second rate version of yourself? Are you so interested in travel that you can’t afford to see your health decline at a young age? Or maybe you want to live your life to the fullest and know that strong health will make every day more enjoyable?

Think about your motivations, and write down your best insights so you can come back to them when your commitment seems to fade. If inspired, pick a photo, create a collage or frame a statement of your motivations so you can keep them in mind effortlessly. Your visual aids will keep you on track. You could also join the online conversation (see Resources) to see what motivates other readers of this book.

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Lifestyle diseases—illnesses caused by unfortunate sleep, food, and exercise habits—are far more prevalent than any other health issues in modern society. In fact, according to Dr. Liana Lianov of Harvard Medical School, virtually all of the top 10 leading causes of death among American adults are moderately to strongly related to lifestyle patterns. The single greatest opportunity to improve health therefore lies in improving personal habits, which starts with building health skills.

This workbook is based on research on the interactions among the various aspects of good health as well as what we know about self-regulation, goal pursuit, and successful change. It can help you take action to improve your overall vitality and well-being. It uses an approach we call the Smarts and Stamina Compass (SaS Compass for short). We hope this approach will guide you on your journey, the way it has already guided many of our clients.

Our compass may look quite simple and intuitive at first, but there are literally thousands of pages of empirical and scientific research backing it up. Are you ready?

Without further ado—drum roll, please! Ladies and Gentlemen, please turn the page, and discover the Smarts and Stamina Compass!
The Smarts and Stamina Compass

The *SaS Compass* is a tool that facilitates progress without depending solely on will-power. As you may have guessed by now, the 4 compass points are sleep, food, mood, and exercise. We use the image of a compass because it can guide you on your way to health, and the 4 points are strongly interdependent.

This approach is based on the following concepts which are well-supported by research in physiology and positive psychology:

- All 4 compass points are interconnected by the biochemical activity they promote or inhibit.
- While each point is individually important for optimal health, working on a single point in isolation is difficult and unlikely to succeed.
- Increasing healthy behaviors in one compass point can make it easier to make better choices in other ones.
- Neglecting any point can make it harder to improve behaviors in other areas.

The *Smarts and Stamina Compass* facilitates the creation of positive habits by leveraging the synergies among its elements. You can kick-start an upward spiral by starting with activities that build on your strengths. These lead to small victories that make further changes easier. As you learn about yourself and explore healthful alternatives that can be easily integrated into your day-to-day routine, you will gain momentum. Soon, healthy behaviors will become an integral part of your way of life, and of who you are.
**Spinning Your Wheels**

Here’s your first activity. Use the following diagram to get a quick overview of your current health habits. Think about how you’ve been handling yourself over the past 2-4 weeks. Starting with the top wedge, how satisfied are you with your sleep habits? Highlight the line that corresponds to your level of satisfaction from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). Repeat for food, mood, and exercise.

**Figure 1: Health Wheel**

![Health Wheel Diagram]

Looking at the 4 arcs you drew and seeing them as one full wheel, what kind of ride are you in for? Is your wheel even or uneven? Is it large or small? How bumpy is your road? Are you fretfully spinning a very small wheel or gracefully rolling at high intensity? Record your initial thoughts here, so you can remember your starting point and admire your progress later on.

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This workbook will help you roll on bigger, smoother wheels. Here’s why.
To summarize: if one of the main reasons you skimp on your health habits is to get more done, yet being healthier would help you be more productive, then let’s declare the dilemma settled and explore how to facilitate the implementation of good habits. You can use the SaS Compass to find your way through the storm.

A Word about Stress

For the last 4 or 5 decades, between 60% and 90% of all doctor visits have been related to stress in America, and the picture isn’t much rosier elsewhere. The World Health Organization calls depression and burnout the number 1 cause of work disability worldwide, and the most costly disease in the world. It’s really time for us to start taking stress more seriously.

Many of the activities in this workbook have lasting impact on your stress levels. Some address the issue directly by helping you eliminate unnecessary stressors. Others take a physiological approach by helping you reduce cortisol or increase serotonin, which will make you feel more cool, calm, and collected. The benefits of effective stress management are considerable:

• Mental: You are better able to think clearly and make good decisions.
• Physical: You achieve improved immune function and reduced blood pressure.
• Emotional: You feel calmer and more energized.
• Spiritual: You may feel a greater sense of meaning and purpose.

If stress is a big issue for you, consider integrating the practices in Do a Mini into your routine fairly early in the process. It would be a great place for you to start.

Want more? We make it easy!

Get the full version on http://tinyurl.com/SmartsAndStaminaBook
Visit us online at www.SmartsAndStamina.com
Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SmartsAndStamina
Follow us on Twitter @gotsas - Call us on 610-945-6141
How to Use This Workbook

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**How to Progress**

While this book may seem linear, it isn’t meant to be. As you start changing your habits in one compass point, you’ll see that resistance to change in the other 3 categories will naturally diminish. After you’ve given your attention to a particular element and feel you’ve made good progress, explore other compass points, and see where the process takes you. Go where you feel compelled, and trust your instincts.

We leveraged the fact that what gets measured gets managed. Rather than fill pages with clever advice and scientific data, we provide you with ample space so you can record your own experience with each activity. Keep as many notes as you can so you have a track record of where you’ve been. The benefits of journaling are seemingly endless, starting with helping you reflect more clearly on what works and what doesn’t, and using that information to good effect. Equally important, if you get distracted from pursuit of your health habits for a few weeks or months, your notes and personal data will help you pick up exactly where you left off.

We also recommend that you resist the temptation to try many new things all at once. Keep in mind that it usually takes at least 3 weeks for a new habit to become natural. Also understand that you really can’t change several habits effectively and sustainably all at once—unless you have suddenly been rushed into a completely different reality! (If you really can, please reach out to us. You are a rare bird, and we’d like to hear your story!) Besides, even though we provide you with 50 avenues, it’s not a contest about how many you can successfully apply. It’s about finding those that will best fit your lifestyle and render the highest return for your effort. See each activity as a great bottle of well-aged wine or a dish from a new culture that you are trying out for the first time. Take the time to play around with it, explore its subtleties, and savor its various flavors before you form a final opinion.

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What You’ll Find in Each Chapter

This workbook contains 50 chapters, each describing a different avenue to better health habits. The chapters are organized into 5 categories: General, Sleep, Food, Mood, and Exercise. The General avenues tend to shed light on all 4 points of the compass, while the others are more specific to a particular point. With a few exceptions, each chapter has the following structure:

- **Science Says…:** This section includes a few concepts that reflect the research supporting the chapter. Not every single item in this section is directly based on science, but most are. The research itself is not described in detail in this book, but there are references in the References & Inspirations section on p. 26 to books, articles, and Web pages that provide more information.

- **Story:** We all learn best from stories of other people, their situations, what they try, and what happens to them. The stories are based on real people, sometimes multiple people merged into a single story. To protect their privacy, all names are changed, and some of our protagonists even received a sex change as well.

The final section of each chapter is called **Build the Skills** because formation of healthy habits is so dependent on a range of skills that can be learned and practiced. This section is divided into 3 parts:

- **Mindfulness:** Activities that help you learn more about your own current preferences, tendencies, strengths, and response patterns. We used the word Mindfulness intentionally to represent non-judgmental self-awareness. We hope you will turn your internal judge off as you collect the data that will support you as you later take action.

- **Plan & Execute:** Activities that cause you to take action and then reflect on the results.

- **Onward & Upward:** A final reflection about what can be gained from this avenue that might carry over into other avenues or other aspects of your life.
Let's Get Started

You Are the Expert on You

Nobody knows you as well as you do, and most activities in this book include ways to learn even more about yourself. We expect that some of our suggestions will seem just right, while others won’t. People are different! For that reason, we provide lots of different options, so you can choose what’s best for you.

Our suggestions will work for most people, most of the time, but no solution will ever work for everyone, all the time. In fact, nothing screams scam as loud and clear as companies claiming that their solution is 100% guaranteed to work for you, your personality, and your lifestyle when they don’t know the first thing about you! If an activity doesn’t suit you, there is nothing wrong with you—and there is nothing wrong with the activity either. It’s just not the right fit. Like you and your ex. (OK—maybe there was something wrong with your ex, but we won’t go there!)

Now if none of the activities in this workbook seems to be helpful, you might want to review your motivations. Are you out to prove nothing will ever work for you so you can maintain the status quo? Are you in need of more extensive support? If so, consider visiting us online to see if you’d feel comfortable working one-on-one with a wellness coach.

Also remember that change is a process that goes 2 steps forward, one step back. Some days you will feel like a rock star, while other days you’ll feel like a total flop. But the difference between rock stars and total flops is the commitment to try again. Before long, a lot of the behaviors suggested in this book will become second nature, and they won’t require as much effort. Better yet, your body will actively ask for more sleep, vegetables, and exercise when you fall off track. At that point, getting back in the game won’t be an effort, but a relief!

Since you are the expert on you, trust yourself. You may have failed to achieve health goals in the past, but perhaps that was because you were focusing on short term results in only one of the SAS Compass points, while the other elements were working against you. Now that you have a solid technique in your hands, we’ll help you see that you have the ability to lead a healthy life.

Enough said. This workbook makes the connection between health, happiness, and success more accessible, understandable, and reachable. Now it’s up to you to take action and to reap the rewards.

Enjoy the journey!

----- Following are 2 selected chapters from the body of the book, as well as the introduction to the relevant sections. -----
"If I follow 5 different diets at the same time, one of them is bound to work!"
Food is certainly a hot topic these days. It has been for quite some time, and the craze is not about to fade. From what we should eat to what we shouldn’t eat, there’s enough information out there to drive us bananas.

Well, you’ll be happy to know that we’ve paid attention to the available information as well as the popular propaganda, and here are a few facts that are recognized across the board:

• While some diet plans preach for us to eat more or less meat, more or less dairy, or more or less starch, every sound plan advises us to eat more fresh vegetables.

• Similarly, the list of “super foods we have to have” changes every month. Rather than let it make your head spin, understand that all it really means is that the age-old rule of embracing variety still applies.

• Overeating will never serve you well, even when disguised as well-deserved indulgence.

So we’ve created the next 10 chapters to keep you on track towards more vegetables, greater variety, and healthy moderation. We are confident that no matter what “new magical weight-loss formula” is promoted in the press this year, we’ll still stand by our suggestions next year. Isn’t that good news?

Good food habits will benefit your health in the following ways:

• Different food choices can facilitate or hinder sleep. See Snack Before Bed? Yep for Some, Nope for Others!

• Where there is good food, there is good mood. Conversely, poor nutrition is associated with depression. Eating well will help you maintain high energy levels and avoid sugar highs and lows.

• Constant energy facilitates productivity and makes it easier for you to find the oomph you need to exercise.

Are you ready to be healthier, more energetic, and more productive? Dig in, and enjoy!
Eating by Design

Science Says...

- Food can serve many functions in our lives beyond nutrition, including celebration, comfort, distraction, motivation, and consolation.
- The more functions food serves for us, the more likely we are to find ourselves eating more than we need or intend.
- When we are aware of the other functions filled by eating, we can find other ways to fill the same functions so that we can achieve greater control over the urge to eat.

Story

Melissa was an avowed emotional eater. She liked to celebrate life’s joyful events around gourmet seafood meals. She enjoyed fairly constant salty nibbles at her desk in the afternoon because it kept her mind off of the repetitiveness of her work tasks. Whenever she was nervous about an upcoming event, she’d have what she called her “power foods”—usually a large serving of chocolate-covered almonds or a hot chocolate, preferably with tea cookies or brownies. Nothing could appease her tears like mac’n cheese, spaghetti with meatballs, or burgers and fries.

Food was also an easy connector allowing Melissa to bond with other people. She’d go visit her family at meal times or get together with friends at local restaurants. She’d bring homemade baked goodies to work to impress her co-workers, and she’d have food-related conversations at the water cooler.

Melissa was always chubbier than she’d like. But after she got promoted to a more stressful yet no less tedious job assignment, she turned obese. When she could no longer camouflage her bulk under baggy shirts and sweaters, her weight problem became a constant preoccupation, just as continuous as her desire for food. She found herself in an uncomfortable predicament: she still wanted the food, but she no longer wanted to want it. Her direct and indirect desires were officially at war with each other, which created a lot of uncomfortable dissonance for Melissa.

In an effort to bring her desires into harmony, Melissa decided to create a meal plan for herself. She decided to include 3 servings of fruits, as many servings of vegetables as she’d want, 2 servings of meat or fish, 6 servings of grains, one yogurt, and one glass of soy milk each day. She also allowed herself 2 additional food items daily, which could be whatever she liked. Sometimes she’d use them at meals, and other times she’d use them for treats of various kinds.

Whenever she’d crave something that wasn’t in her meal plan, she’d remind herself of all the reasons why she did not want the food. It wasn’t easy for her to do at first, but it became more natural with practice.

To alleviate her need for constant munching at work, she started to take an afternoon break, which she usually spent walking outside. She looked forward to that breath of fresh air, and thinking about it became enough to keep her going. She also became very fond of games. Rather than get together with family and friends only over food, she’d suggest a game of cards or
Scattergories. She got a Wii® for her birthday, and bought a dance game that she used at parties. The dancers were active and the rest were jiggling to the music and laughing uproariously. The games kept her mind off the internal struggle over wanting to eat.

It took Melissa 3 months before she stuck to a full week of the food plan without cheating. **While it may have felt like a long time, it really is a short period to unlearn a lifetime of poor eating habits and learn a new way of viewing food.**

**Build the Skills**

**Mindfulness**

What are the main reasons why you eat when you are not hungry? For example, some people automatically grab a snack the minute they walk in the house. Pay attention to your eating behaviors for the next several days to see if you can find patterns around what makes you want to eat at times when you aren’t hungry.

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What are the main reasons why you want to hold back from eating when you are not hungry? For some people, the reasons may be style, health, budget, or simply that overeating is unsexy. Perhaps it is difficult to get anything done after eating too much. What are your reasons? Be as detailed as possible in your answer, and make sure to include both rational and emotional arguments.

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**Plan & Execute**

Based on the first activity above, what functions does food serve in your life? Are these functions at odds with a sound health plan? If so, can you reassign those functions to other activities? For example, Melissa filled her need for distraction at work with an afternoon walk rather than with salty nibbles. Perhaps you automatically go for unneeded food at predictable times. Could you replace that behavior with something else? For example, go to your voicemail rather than the fridge first thing when you get home. See *Upgrade Your Habits* for more tips and suggestions around this activity.
It’s a good idea to find ways to remind yourself of the reasons why you want to stay away from food when you find your feelings about eating are in conflict. For example, you could keep your answers to the second question above on a sticky note at the back of your television remote controller to slow down your nighttime snacking, or you could create a mantra for yourself that family meals are mainly about the family, not the meal. How can you keep your eyes on the goal?

Go back to the table above. Highlight the tips that have worked best for you, and put an X next to the ones that have been least successful so far.

Is there something to learn from your highlighted tips and your Xs? For example, if it’s easy for you to keep your resolve when you are socializing and difficult when you are on your own, maybe a call to your health buddy can distract you from temptation. If it’s the opposite, maybe asking your friends not to tempt you is the key. If so, see No! to Arm Twisters.
Think about ways to use your highlighted elements in service of the ones you marked with Xs wherever possible.

Can you now change a few Xs into highlights? If so, write here what helped. If not, try something else, and see if that works better. The goal is to diminish your number of Xs to only a few left. When you have only 1 or 2 Xs remaining, maybe you can be empathetic with yourself and accept these instances.

Onward & Upward
What did you learn from this exercise that you’d like to remember for the future? What do you resolve to do if you find yourself eating when you are not hungry?

Want more? We make it easy!
Get the full version on http://tinyurl.com/SmartsAndStaminaBook
Visit us online at www.SmartsAndStamina.com
Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SmartsAndStamina
Follow us on Twitter @gotsas - Call us on 610-945-6141
"What fits your busy schedule better, exercising one hour a day or being dead 24 hours a day?"
Most of us think of exercise as a way to lose weight and look good. Others are more concerned with preserving health or preventing undesirable conditions such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol. Studies by Michael Babyak and others have shown that exercise can be more effective than medication when it comes to controlling depression.

But very few realize what exercise does for the brain. In the US, 40% of adults do no exercise whatsoever. These people might think again if they knew just how much regular exercise enhances mental functioning.

Consider this question: what differentiates an animal from a plant? The answer is twofold. The first is the animal’s ability to move around, go places, and use its body purposefully. The second is its physical brain. Plants may have intelligence, but they don’t have an actual brain, because they feed themselves from the ground underneath them and from the sun rays from above. Animals have to go find food, and so they need the ability to think, strategize, and move.

The connection is quite clear: if you have a brain, you need to move. The more you move, the stronger your brain will be. In fact, John Ratey and other researchers present strong evidence that exercise helps us delay or even prevent dementia as we age.

Exercise also benefits our health in the following ways:

- Serotonin levels rise, helping us feel cooler, calmer, and more upbeat, and making us better able to regulate our health behaviors. Higher levels of serotonin also reduce the incidence of depression.
- Dopamine levels rise, making us feel more energetic and capable.
- Cortisol levels drop, making us less stressed, less prone to cravings, and less vulnerable to premature aging.

Time to get moving. Ready? Get set! Go to the next page!

Oh! We almost forgot! Before you rush to the gym, we need to advise: “Consult your doctor before taking on any new form of new exercise...” In the vast majority of cases, he or she will tell you to start slow and listen to your body, but go ahead.
Curiosity Rules!

Science Says …

• Many people don’t exercise because they find it boring.

• Psychologist Todd Kashdan suggests that we think of curiosity as an explorer knob that we can turn up to find more zest and less anxiety in life. When we turn up the explorer knob with exercise, we can find ways to stay interested that help us persist.

• Just being curious isn’t enough. We need to make specific commitments as well. When we think, “I’ll exercise this week,” the plan is so fuzzy that it leaves a lot of room not to execute. If instead we see a volleyball match in our day planners at 8PM on Wednesday, there’s a strong chance we’ll be there. We’ve taken the debate out of the process.

Story

Rachel had made it to her mid-fifties without ever exercising much. She had never cared and didn’t think she ever would. But when her husband Barry was told by their doctor that he really couldn’t afford being inactive anymore, she felt it was her duty to support the process and be more active with him.

Rachel needed to overcome her previous lack of interest, so she decided to try something new. “There are so many different options out there, surely with a little ingenuity we can find something we’ll enjoy doing together,” she told Barry.

They discovered that it was very easy to be a guest visitor in different leagues, groups, and classes. Most of the time, they were even invited to try out for free. They decided to try everything that they had never done before, provided that it didn’t seem too scary (no bungee diving for them!) and that they could find it within a 20 minute drive from their house.

After searching the web, reading the local papers, and talking to their friends, they managed to try 9 different activities: ballroom dancing, tai chi, curling, yoga, swimming, badminton, tennis, Zumba®, and participating in a walking club.

They both enjoyed the process of experimenting together. Because they found that socializing while exercising switched their focus away from the effort and toward having a good time, they liked dancing and the walking club best. Barry particularly enjoyed the intensity of curling. When the badminton birdie came towards her, Rachel found it so funny that she’d laugh instead of hitting it, giving Barry a real advantage. Laughing made her forget that she had never been a fan of exercise.

So they joined all 4 activities! For the past 3 years, Rachel and Barry have played badminton every Monday night, danced every Tuesday night, curled on Thursdays, and walked with the club on Saturday mornings. They enjoy the variety that this routine provides, which has proven an effective way not to get bored. They also know there are other options to try, if any of these become old. Better yet, now that they share new activities together, they have fallen in love all over again.
**Build the Skills**

**Mindfulness**

In the list below, circle all the activities that you have ever been even slightly curious about at any point of your life. Go through the list again and circle the ones you don’t know much about. Use the lines at the end to add your own ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aerobics</th>
<th>Cross-country running</th>
<th>Jazz dancing</th>
<th>Soccer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aikido</td>
<td>Cross-country skiing</td>
<td>Judo</td>
<td>Spinning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aqua-aerobics</td>
<td>Curling</td>
<td>Karate</td>
<td>Swimming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>Lacrosse</td>
<td>Taekwondo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballet</td>
<td>Field hockey</td>
<td>Pilates</td>
<td>Tai Chi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballroom dancing</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Polo</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>Power walking</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belly dancing</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>Rock climbing</td>
<td>Water polo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biking</td>
<td>Horse-back riding</td>
<td>Rollerblading</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot camp</td>
<td>Ice skating</td>
<td>Rowing</td>
<td>Zumba®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>Ice hockey</td>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skiing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Exercise can fill many needs other than physical fitness. It can serve mental needs such as curiosity, discovery, experimentation, self-improvement, and mastery. It can serve the social needs of meeting others and being part of a group. It can serve emotional needs such as relieving stress, building resilience, or having a chance to laugh. Choosing a game from your childhood, such as hula hoop, tag, or jumping rope, can keep you feeling young. Exercise can also fulfill spiritual needs such as treating your body with respect and feeling connected to other forms of life. Thinking about all these needs and maybe a few additions of your own, can you circle a few more options in the table above?

Now which of the activities circled above could you try? Research what’s available in your area. Search online, talk to your neighbors, look at community boards, read the local papers, stop in facilities you normally drive by, and so on. Highlight all the activities that you are willing to try.
Plan & Execute

Now it’s time to try a few activities. Give each highlighted activity a fair chance. If you don’t like it at first, have you given yourself a chance to learn how to do it? Were the circumstances unfavorable, such as bad weather on your first ski trip? After you’ve gone through your list, write down the ones that were most fun for you. Also write down the ones that have potential to become fun if you give them more time.

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Did you find a single activity you can become passionate about, or would you prefer to plan a routine that includes a lot of variety, like Rachel and Barry did?

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Now is time to plan your schedule. What activities would you like to commit to? Based on the times of classes, availability of facilities, and your own schedule, what are the best times of the week to participate in selected activities?

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Exercise Avenues
Make sure to mark scheduled physical events in your calendar. Does it make it easier to stick to your exercise intentions? Do you find yourself looking forward to the events?

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How about bringing some of your indoor workouts outside? Research shows that exercising in the presence of natural elements, such as changes in scenery, temperature, terrain, and wind, brings even more benefits than working out in a completely controlled environment. Being outside is also a recognized mood booster, as described in *Embrace Mother Nature*. What outdoor locations could bring interesting and enjoyable variation to your exercise?

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What does exercising outdoors contribute to your exercise routine? Do you find it energizing or relaxing or a great source of variety? Do you need specific gear to make sure you can be active outside year-round?

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Still bored despite the variety? See *The Sweet Spot: Flow*.

**Onward & Upward**

What have you learned about yourself from exploring new alternatives to exercise? Can curiosity be your ally for other health habits?
Visit us online at [www.SmartsAndStamina.com](http://www.SmartsAndStamina.com) to get additional free resources. Our blog will share more science-based tips that you can apply immediately to improve your sleep, food, mood, or exercise habits and to boost your productivity. We’ll keep each post really short to make sure you have time to read them. We hope you join the conversation.

There are literally thousands of pages of research that support the *Smarts and Stamina Compass*. We have listed references that you might find interesting or informative. Some of them may inspire you. They are organized so that you can easily find books, articles, and Web resources that are specific to a particular point of the compass. To avoid repetition, we only list each source once under the category where it is most relevant, even though it may support more than one section of the book.

**References for the Introductory Chapters**


----- Other references removed for the purposes of this preview. -----
After a first career in the fast-paced corporate world, Marie-Josée Shaar made it her mission to reverse the current epidemics of sleep deprivation, obesity, depression, and physical inactivity. A Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) from the University of Pennsylvania, she is certified as a Nutrition and Wellness Consultant and as a Personal Trainer. Her clients and colleagues find that her joyful energy brings out their own strengths and positivity. She and her husband Rob find joie de vivre hiking, biking, scuba diving and entertaining friends over nice and healthy dinner parties. They divide their time between homes in Philadelphia and Montreal.

Kathryn Britton, MAPP, is the Associate Editor of Positive Psychology News Daily. A professional coach, she has authored more than 70 articles and edited 2 books on applications of positive psychology to daily life. As a former software engineer, Kathryn is detail-oriented, yet creative and visionary at the same time. She teaches positive workplace concepts to graduate students in project management at the University of Maryland. She and her husband Ed raised their 2 children in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. They nourish their flame with ballroom dancing, hiking, reading aloud about science, and finding new ways to cook vegetables.

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