



PHYSICAL HEALTH

Outdoor energy

Busy workplace and facilities managers need to ensure they're physically healthy. Getting outside to exercise might be just the tonic, says **Ben Scurr**

Right now, there is a profound shift away from conventional gyms toward the great outdoors.

It's no wonder, given that our daily routine in our digitally saturated society often involves solitary indoor workouts, further isolating us from the world around us.

The change is gradual, but more people want to get outside to exercise. So what's driving this shift in the perception of exercise?

Let's wind the clock back a few years. In the past, the belief was that if you wanted to get fit you would have to join a gym, with its shiny tools, whirring machines and loud classes. Meticulous rows of equipment and gym-goers donned in the latest branded gear could often feel intimidating.

Gyms remain a common choice for those wanting to work out, but the effectiveness of such an approach is being questioned.

In a society marked by constant digital connectivity, the daily routine often involves waking up, checking the phone, commuting

or working from home with poor posture and makeshift desks, more calls, and capping the day with indoor exercise all while our attention is monopolised by AirPods, leaving us detached from human interactions.

There is another way

Consider an alternative scenario: hiking in nearby hills with a group of like-minded people, surrounded by lush green trees, vibrant wildflowers and chirping birds.

As you climb higher, you feel your heart rate increasing and your muscles working hard, but it's worth it for the sense of accomplishment that comes from reaching the summit. The view from the top is stunning: mountains, valleys and forests.

You feel pride and confidence for pushing yourself to your limits. You enjoy the adrenaline rush! When you get back to your car, you're tired but energised with an overwhelming sense of achievement. You've even made a few new friends.

Outdoor exercise doesn't have to be an 'extreme sport' like paddleboarding or mountain biking. Long walks or group exercises in local parks and community spaces provide a wholesome alternative. These activities contribute to physical wellbeing while fostering community and connecting individuals with nature and each other in a way that promotes health and mental rejuvenation.

Mental gains

While acknowledging the benefits of gym workouts, we must consider the mental health gains associated with outdoor activities. Outdoor exercise:

- Contributes to vitamin D production;
- Enhances mental wellbeing;
- Increases motivation;
- Connects us with nature;
- Provides social opportunities;
- Offers a variety of activities;
- Remains very cost-effective; and
- Improves our sleep quality.

If you believe that movement is medicine for your body and that the outdoors is the tonic for the mind, you can find an activity that works for you.

Exercising outside with a qualified fitness coach or personal trainer should start with addressing any health issues before building the pillars of strength. Remember: health first, fitness second.

How to get started

The starting point for anyone embarking on a new outdoor routine can be as simple as:

- 1** Devoting 30 minutes a day to walking outside;
- 2** Leaving your phone on silent and in your pocket (in case of emergency); and
- 3** Noting down three things you see and three things you hear.

Intentionally disconnecting from the digital world enables us to redirect from the daily grind towards self-awareness – a crucial first step to finding personal freedom. 📍



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