

The Hidden Joys of Being Fit

By Maggie Winzeler of Wellnesswinz.com

The benefits of exercise include weight loss, energy, health and more...obviously! But what about those not-so-obvious moments of hidden joy that you experience at the end of a run? Or at the end of a Pilates class? It's not just the larger physical changes that are possible, but the little things that make us raving fans of exercise. Here are a few of those priceless moments that being fit can evoke pride, accomplishment, happiness, excitement, and peace.

Pride

Pride is the natural response we have for conquering challenging feats like massive weight loss or running a marathon, but it also stirs in our souls when we take on smaller challenges. For example, have you ever found yourself beaming following a good workout to cap off your 10-hour day at the office? Or have you ever felt on top of the world because you finally made time for *yourself*, avoiding procrastination and walking into the gym before primetime?

There's something amazing about these momentary feelings of pride because they give us confidence that we can keep recommitting to our health. Plus, getting to the gym early – or even at all – is like being a kid standing before an exciting playground – where to start first? The free weights? The elliptical? The pool?

Accomplishment

Accomplishment doesn't just happen at the end of a 12-week exercise program. It happens when we make small advancements in our fitness and push past barriers. For example, that moment when you pick up the 10 lb. dumbbells and realize that

they don't feel heavy enough anymore. Should you move up to 12.5 lbs.? Are you ready? You set down the 10 lb. weights and grin. *Yes, I'm getting stronger!*

Another scenario that commonly evokes feelings of accomplishment includes making it past what I like to call the "Frozen 5" minutes in an exercise class. The "Frozen 5" are those five minutes of exercise about two-thirds of the way through a group class when you feel like giving up. The clock seems to slow down and your mental resolve weakens as you feel more breathless with every pedal stroke or shoulder press that is demanded from your body. The cheerful fitness instructor suddenly seems cruel and distant, and the music fades into the background while your thoughts of quitting get louder and louder. In what feels like forever (but is actually only five minutes), this timeframe passes and you get an extra jolt of energy to finish class with. Making it past this hurdle feels even more satisfying than finishing the class sometimes.

Happiness

There's a lot of joy that comes from finishing a workout, right? Working out makes you feel good for many reasons after the fact: You can look forward to the rest of your day, feeling like if nothing else goes in your favor then at least you managed to fit in exercise! You can ride the endorphin high with exuberance! You can enjoy feeling strong and resilient! The list goes on. *If these feelings come up, why would we keep coming back to exercise again and again and again?*

Personally, I experience moments of glee when I change environments after a workout. For example, there's something about walking out of the gym's chilly air into a bright warm day. The way my sweat evaporates off my skin when the sun hits it stirs something in me.

Excitement

Although many people talk about dread and fear being associated with exercise, I think that excitement is a stronger force; it's what gets people in the gym door or out on a trail. There's something incredibly thrilling about walking into a new exercise class for the first time or trying out a new piece of exercise equipment (or even a new workout move!). It's as though you sense that there is a world of endless possibilities before you.

What can be more invigorating than realizing, no matter your age or experience level, that you can try new things, push your body, and feel incredible? Exercise has the power to thrill and excite us in new ways, every day.

Peace

Exercise gets our hearts pumping and wakes us up. But even when we're giving maximum effort, there can be a great peace that accompanies working out. I know many runners who say that there is a point on the run when they finally take a deep breath in and out, and surrender their worries. They let go and allow themselves simply to be.

Similarly, at the end of Pilates classes, participants are off the floor, standing upright, with delightful tingles and feelings of serenity can overtake the whole body from head to toe. It's a feeling you never want to leave your body because it's so blissful!

Which raw feelings compel *you* to exercise? Are they similar or different from these? We'd love to hear it! [Subscribe](#) to our newsletter for more workout tips.