



THE NASM GUIDE TO 30 DAYS TO IMPROVED WELLNESS



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Disclaimer

The content in this guide is intended to be used for informational purposes only. It is not to be used to diagnose or treat any medical condition or disease, and not to replace guidance from licensed healthcare provider.

Welcome!

Welcome to the National Academy of Sports Medicine's guide to 30 Days to Improved Wellness. We hope you find the provided framework and strategies empower you to pursue your wellness goals with clarity and direction. Knowing where to start when working on your well-being can be challenging, especially if you feel overwhelmed by all the available options and resources. Using a focused plan on a few key areas is an excellent way to detangle the clutter and create positive momentum.

About NASM

The National Academy of Sports Medicine is the leader in educating and credentialing fitness, wellness, and performance professionals across the globe. NASM provides valid, up-to-date learning content on topics that improve the health and well-being of those they serve. We pride ourselves in creating practical content you can apply right away. Learn more at www.nasm.org, your favorite social media platform, or wherever you listen to podcasts.

Getting the Most from This Guide

This guide will walk you through information explaining how to cultivate greater wellness over the next 30 days. We'll make sense of confusing information, so you won't have to. Then you'll be equipped with actionable steps to apply whenever you like.

Come back and use the information as a reference at any time. Be sure to use the key takeaways and application strategies in whatever way that makes sense for you. Do not feel obligated to put everything into action right away. When you're ready for a deeper dive, please check out our recommended resources. Most importantly, be patient with yourself and your journey. A little self-compassion goes a long way.



Introduction

Picture this: You and your friend are outside walking. Side by side, you laugh about stories from the day, ask each other questions, and show you genuinely care about each other. There is a feeling of synchrony as you walk, and sharing such a wonderfully positive feeling feels incredible. Hold onto this image for a moment.

Now think about how that image made you feel. Throughout this 30-day wellness journey, you will learn why moments like this and having more of them may have the ability to influence you on several levels and have the potential to affect entire communities positively. Engaging in moments like this is an example of wellness in action.

Defining Wellness

Wellness is considered an active process. Through one decision at a time, people can better understand themselves while making steps towards a more successful existence (National Wellness Institute, 2020). Dr. Bill Hettler (1976) argues that six dimensions contribute to overall wellness: occupational, physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional. A journey to wellness involves the pursuit of self-improvement in these domains (NASM). Through self-led discovery and practice, people can improve various markers of well-being and **health**.

When we envision ourselves in the future feeling better physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally- what is one step we can take in this pursuit of betterment? There is no one correct answer, and it can be overwhelming with so many avenues available. However, recently, there has been an increased focus on two aspects of wellness: engaging in physical activity and connecting with others. They are high payoff activities relative to the initial effort required and thus make excellent places to start when improving one's wellness.

Movement and Connection

The next question is how do we define movement and connection, and what should we know?

Movement is any physical activity beyond someone's resting energy expenditure (Faulkner et al., 2015). Movement could be a structured **exercise** program from a personal trainer but also



includes day-to-day activities like gardening or chores. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023b) argues that regular physical activity is one of the best things someone can do for their health. Increasing movement can benefit brain health, reduce the risk of disease, strengthen bones and muscles, and improve the ability to do everyday activities, among other benefits (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023b). Movement will look different for each person based upon their age, abilities, and other individual differences, and everyone can benefit from engaging in physical activity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023b). Social connection also benefits wellness (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2017; Fredrickson, 2014).

Social connection is an umbrella term because it describes how individuals can connect with others emotionally, physically, and behaviorally (Holt-Lunstad, 2018). Within social connection, three categorizations have developed to provide a better understanding of the diverse nature of social relationships. These include:

1. **Structure:** how many connections a person has, how often they interact with others, and the types of relationships they experience (e.g., family member, friend, romantic partner, co-worker, whether they are living alone, and so on.)
2. **Function:** To what extent can these connections be relied upon in various ways (e.g., emotional support or mentorship when learning something new)
3. **Quality:** to what extent everyday interactions and relationships are positive or negative (e.g., can refer to satisfaction in a relationship or whether someone feels included or excluded from a group) (Holt-Lunstad, 2018).

Social connection and everyday interactions are vital in the same way food, water, and air are essential (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2017; Fredrickson, 2014). Social connection has garnered more attention because, according to data on premature mortality, lacking social connection has been considered more dangerous than drinking six alcoholic drinks daily and just as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes daily (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2017). In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory released a public statement calling for focusing on strengthening social connections because of their health-giving effects. Connections can help us build resiliency (Gittell, 2016) and help buffer us from specific stressors (Boothby & Clark, 2018; McKinley, 2020). Positive relationships have also been referred to as one of the critical building blocks of our well-being (Seligman, 2011; 2018).

Researchers suggest there is a particular type of high-quality, everyday interaction that can have a significant bearing on our health and well-being. **Positivity resonance** has been described as an everyday interaction between people, a micro-moment of love that could develop romantically or non-romantically (Zhou et al., 2022). These moments are comprised of three defining features that describe the experience:

- Shared positive **affect**
- Caring nonverbal synchrony (e.g., mutual care expressed by mirroring body language)
- Biological synchrony (i.e., linking even on the level of physiology, such as hearts beating in rhythm) (Zhou et al., 2022).

These experiences can happen anywhere, between anyone (even strangers), and have been linked to higher levels of resilience and flourishing mental health; they also exhibit relationships with lower levels of loneliness, depressive symptoms, and anxiety (Major et al., 2018; Prinzing et al., 2020).

These loving moments may even contribute to a person's sense that life is meaningful (Prinzing et al., 2023). Not only can positivity resonance affect the individual, but more recent research suggests that experiences of positivity resonance can help build **prosocial tendencies** (i.e., acting in the best interests of others), which can facilitate the flourishing of entire communities (Zhou et al., 2022).

Movement and connection have beautiful and unique benefits, but they also have a potent role in influencing and supporting each other.

Exploration of Wellness Through Movement and Connection

When pursuing self-improvement physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally, you may realize that these aspects of wellness do not act in isolation- they influence each other. Both movement and connection have beneficial effects when pursued on their own. However, research suggests that these two concepts are uniquely linked and have a bidirectional relationship (Laird et al., 2018). Movement can affect connection, and connection can affect movement. Engaging in structured physical activity has strengthened current relationships and formed new connections (Laird et al., 2018; Zuo et al., 2021). Some examples include joining a recreational sports team and making new friends, taking a group fitness class with a sense of community, or joining a local walking club and connecting with others. Connection influences physical activity in several scenarios. For example, higher levels of support from a romantic partner have been related to 25

additional minutes of physical activity daily (Berli et al., 2018). Researchers suggest that part of this may be due to couples working out together (Berli et al., 2018). Another study illustrates the positive influence of social support from friends. When one person's engagement with physical activity is high, it is associated with increased physical activity among their friends (Darlow & Xu, 2011).

CHECK IT OUT

Social support, in general, can influence movement levels. Social support can be emotional (e.g., encouragement to participate in physical activity), instrumental (e.g., logistically helping someone engage in physical activity, such as driving someone to practice or the gym), informational (e.g., providing instruction for how to use a machine at the gym), or co-participating (e.g., walking with a partner) (Heaney & Israel, 2008; Laird et al., 2018; Yao & Rhodes, 2015).

The relationship between movement and connection provides more options for improving wellness. Movement and connection greatly benefit your well-being on their own or in combination as a beautiful, reciprocal relationship. You can engage in whatever works best for you and your circumstances - cultivating them individually or together. This gives you freedom as you think about the next steps (figuratively and maybe literally).

Creating Your 30-Day Wellness Plan

This 30-day plan is not about exercise prescription with pre-selected exercises, volume, and duration, but instead to shed light on the benefits that movement and social connection can provide while asking the question: What could your life look like if you gave both domains more attention?

You determine your plan. You may even feel that 30 days is too long or too short to engage in a plan. No pressure. Wellness is ultimately a self-led process. This wellness plan focuses on movement and connection and provides general guidelines based on the latest research. It is a resource for you to pick and choose what feels authentic and meaningful to you. Consider this a set of directions or a roadmap, yet if you want to take detours, skip a section, and stop to enjoy the view, feel free. This is an opportunity to explore, find a path that works for you, and create your own goals in these areas. You are the world's foremost expert on you.

For this 30-day plan, you will want something to write with and write on to work through the guided reflection, exploration, and practices below. This is as simple as a pencil, journal, or dedicated space in a mobile device or computer. You should also ensure you can hold onto your responses to these exercises to reflect on them later.

This 30-day plan is a mixture of reflection and goal-setting exercises for movement and connection. When thinking about goal setting, prioritize goals that are meaningful to you and that you would enjoy doing. Not only will this be more fun, but research says that prioritizing enjoyable and meaningful goals makes them more likely to stick (Teixeira et al., 2012). As you are brainstorming and writing, think about activities that would be rewarding and why they would be rewarding.

Week One: Reflection

Week one focuses on discovering your own definitions for movement and connection while reflecting on what is currently working well for you in those areas. You may already be doing things that contribute to your day-to-day movement and everyday social interactions, but you may need to realize it. Not only do the activities of week one set the tone and prepare you for future weeks, but reflection and mindset preparation also benefit movement and connection.



CHECK IT OUT

Consider this: When you reflect on the day, do you recognize how much movement is incorporated into your daily life? It is important to remember that movement can involve structured physical activity such as going to the gym but can also include day-to-day tasks like walking the dog, getting the mail, or gardening. How we view these day-to-day tasks may be more powerful than we realize. Research suggests that our mindset about movement can matter.

In a study by Crum and Langer (2007) at Harvard University, the physiological health of 84 hotel attendants was measured over four weeks. One group was told that cleaning hotel rooms is considered good exercise and met the Surgeon General's recommendations for an active lifestyle. The other group (the control group) was not told anything about their activities. After the four weeks, while activity behaviors did not change, the first group perceived that they were getting more exercise than before and, compared to the control group, experienced a decrease in blood pressure, body fat, body weight, body mass index, and waist-to-hip ratio.

Although mindset is not an actual replacement for physical activity and movement in general, these results suggest that mindset can positively affect the relationship between physical activity and health measures. Having a mindset that one's activity level counts for more than one thinks could boost **self-efficacy** (Bandura, 1977; Zahrt & Crum, 2020), and this increased self-efficacy can then support engagement in physical activity (Sallis et al., 1988; Zahrt & Crum, 2020).

What are you currently doing that may be considered movement in your life?

Take a moment to think about the social and interpersonal interactions you may experience daily. How would you define "connection," and what does it mean to you? Dr. Barbara Fredrickson's (2014) positivity resonance argues that these high-quality interactions can happen anywhere, between anyone (e.g., friends, romantic partners, co-workers, and even strangers), and at any time. Moreover, even the act of reflecting on these moments throughout the day and how connected someone feels at the end of the day has been shown to have beneficial effects on physical health (Kok et al., 2013; Kok & Fredrickson, 2010). Therefore, reflecting on social connection and cultivating moments of positivity resonance can be a way to understand your current levels of connection and serve as beneficial stand-alone practices.

HELPFUL HINT

The Power of Mindset

Framing your current physical activities as worth "getting credit for" may boost your self-efficacy and health status. Reflection on connection and instances of positivity resonance may positively influence your health.

Reflective Activity

As mentioned, week one is all about reflection. For most or all nights this week, consider writing your answers to the following prompts:

1. Reflection for Movement:

Think back on your day and ask yourself: beginning with when you woke up, in what ways did you move today? Think about the length of time you were moving for and what it could be compared to in the way we traditionally think of physical activity (i.e., structured exercise). For example, moving boxes could be compared to strength training, and walking the dog could be compared to walking on a treadmill. Now think, how did you feel during and after these movements?

2. Reflection for Connection:

- (a) Recall your day, specifically about the three longest interactions you had. Thinking about the three interactions together, rate how true the following statements are for you on a scale of 1-7 (1=not true at all; 7=very true):
- (b) "During these social interactions, I felt 'in tune' with the person/s around me."
- (c) "During these social interactions, I felt very close to the person/s" (Fredrickson, 2014, p. 98).

At the end of the week, ask yourself: How did these reflections feel? What stood out? Hold onto your responses to the reflections on both movement and connection. Carry them forward to the coming weeks.

HELPFUL HINT

Remember that everyday activities require various combinations of functional strength, balance, endurance, and coordination, typically associated with exercise. Do not limit yourself to only recognizing "workouts" as movement.

Week Two: Exploration of Movement

Week one was about reflecting on the concepts of social connection and movement while identifying where you might already be experiencing both in daily life. In addition to the benefits yielded by understanding our mindset and reflecting on movement and connection, small increases in physical activity and connection can have significant health benefits (Warburton & Bredin, 2017; Major et al., 2018). When looking at your reflections from last week, you may see that you already incorporate some level of movement and connection in daily life. Increasing what we already enjoy doing related to movement and connection, finding ways to enjoy physical activity, or playing around and exploring new activities can be helpful when creating goals for both.



In week two, you get to take things a step further by incorporating your reflections into changing your physical activity and levels of connection. You will do this by focusing on movement in week two and then on connection in week three. In week four, you will combine efforts to increase movement and connection!

There are a few different ways you may find helpful in increasing your movement this week:

- 1.** Add more of what you currently love doing in your week. When setting goals, it is more likely that we will stick to them if it is something we enjoy doing (Teixeira et al., 2012). Increasing movement is no different. What did you enjoy doing last week (if anything), and how can you do more? For example, you may have realized you enjoyed gardening but did not know it contributed to your daily movement. Would you be able to be outdoors more while incorporating movement? Alternatively, maybe you took an online or YouTube yoga class and felt relaxed afterward (combining stress management and movement). Maybe this week you will try two yoga classes instead of just one. Consider how you might build upon what you currently enjoy doing.
- 2.** Find a way to make what you are doing more enjoyable. You may be doing chores around your house and realize this contributes to significant movement, but these chores could be more enjoyable. Alternatively, you may have been using the elliptical at the gym and liked how you felt after the workout but were bored during it. How could this be made more interesting, challenging, or enjoyable? You might listen to fun music or a new podcast while doing these everyday chores or working out on the elliptical.

Making these activities more enjoyable can lead to changes that can be more sustainable in the long term.

3. Try something new with which you may connect. On the other hand, there could be opportunities to play around and explore new types of movement to create a more enjoyable and rewarding experience. Simple, novel stimuli have been suggested to promote interest and enjoyment (Berlyne, 1970). Even familiar stimuli have been shown to create more interest when there is some variation (Sylvester et al., 2018). Because humans crave novel stimuli, researchers question whether incorporating something new or challenging regarding something like physical activity may increase enjoyment and overall interest (Lakicevic et al., 2020). This could play out in many ways. For example, you grew up dancing and enjoyed it but had not danced for some time. Incorporating more dance could be a goal you set for yourself. This may mean taking a few classes at a studio or online or trying out some choreography on social media platforms. New stimuli could also be switching up your

physical activity program. Maybe you have been using the treadmill a lot but decided to try new equipment like the stair climber. Consider finding a way to try something new in your physical activity routine.

Movement Activity

At the beginning of the week, reflect on what you wrote about your physical activity in week one. Consider setting a goal to increase what you already enjoy doing, finding ways to make current movement opportunities more enjoyable, or trying something new to increase your physical activity levels! At the beginning of the week, write down a plan for yourself in one of those areas. How will you accomplish this goal? Then, at the end of the week, ask yourself how you did and what worked well for you throughout the week.

Increasing movement should resonate with you. If you feel any negative emotions around your plan or activities, reset and start over. It should feel intentional, meaningful, and fun.

Week Three: Exploration of Connection

Setting an intention to actively look for and pursue these micro-moments of loving connection throughout the day can be an extra tool to enhance health and well-being (Fredrickson, 2014, p. 101). Although these micro-moments of love can happen between anyone, recent research even suggests that focusing on “weak ties,” or the relationships we have with others that we may not be so close with, may have more significant benefits on prosocial tendencies than



focusing on increasing positivity resonance with already close relationships (Zhou et al., 2022). Researchers believe this may be because focusing on everyday interactions with acquaintances and strangers may contribute to more positive feelings about our community and humanity in general (Zhou et al., 2022). Therefore, when we are trying to increase our everyday interactions, you do not need to limit yourself to only close relationships—think about connection through the lens of a large brush stroke.

What moments could be meaningful and enjoyable to pursue these moments of connection or positivity resonance?

Examples of how this may play out in your day:

- Complimenting the barista if you go someplace to get coffee in the morning.
- In the checkout line at the grocery store, start a conversation with someone in line or the cashier (if that feels like a stretch for you or too awkward, try smiling as you say hello or end the interaction with a “Thank you, have a great day!”).
- Ask a co-worker how they are doing and take the time to genuinely listen to their answer.
- Hold the door open for someone and smile at them.

These moments should feel and be authentic to you. Everyone has different ways to connect that feel authentic. The examples above are by no means exhaustive; think about what works for you. As your day unfolds, look for these opportunities to connect.

Connection Activity

For most or all days during week three, as your day develops, find at least three opportunities to connect with others (Fredrickson, 2014). These moments could happen anywhere and at any time at home, work, errands, school pick-up line, indoor cycling class, or anywhere else you may go throughout the day. Reflect on which moments you feel led to positivity resonance and write them down. Ask yourself: Were you able to actively seek out three moments of positivity resonance? Each day can be a new opportunity to create an intention to be open to and seek out these moments.

At the end of the week, think about how this activity felt for you and how many days (out of 7) you were able to experience positivity resonance—even to a small degree.

HELPFUL HINT

Don't put pressure on yourself to perfect each instance of positivity resonance. These are meant to be small interactions with positive feelings surrounding them. Find what works for you and what you feel good about.

Week Four: Ongoing Exploration, Practice, and Reflection

In the final week of your 30-day plan, consider revisiting any activities from weeks 1-3. You may also consider combining opportunities for movement and connection. Research says there can be benefits to working out with others. A study with 95 young adults found that on days when young adults worked out with their romantic partners, they reported greater relationship satisfaction and more positive affect when exercising and throughout the day, compared to days when they worked out on their own (Sackett-Fox et al., 2021).



The study suggests that working out with a romantic partner may be why both people are more likely to be consistent with their exercise routines. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023a) argue that exercising with a friend can help you feel more motivated to exercise, try something different, and be more consistent with physical activity. It is truly a win-win!

Combining Movement and Connection

At the start of the week, set a goal to do something active that involves connecting with others. Below are some examples that help with brainstorming on your own!

- Invite a friend to go for a walk.
- Take a group fitness class and introduce yourself to someone in class.
- Join a pick-up game of soccer, basketball, or baseball if there is an opportunity in your community.
- Invite a friend to do an online fitness class with you (even if you are in separate locations).
- Sign up and attend a class for dance lessons.
- Ask a neighbor if you can walk dogs together one day this week.
- If you are dating or in a relationship, ask your partner if they want to go to the gym or group fitness studio with you.
- If you live with roommates, family, or a partner, pick two or three chores each and “compete” to finish them first. Think of a motivating prize, or maybe bragging rights are enough.

The take-home point here is that the activity could be done with someone you know well, or you may meet someone new that you can continue exercising with in the future! At the end of the week, think about how combining moments of connection and physical activity made you feel. Is this something you would continue in the future? Why or why not? What worked well for you?

Summary

Over the past 30 days, you explored your definitions of movement and connection, reflected on how and where you were experiencing both in daily life, took steps to increase your movement, and found more opportunities to connect- individually and together. By engaging in this plan, you were an active agent in your wellness journey- which is something to be savored and appreciated.

Success in this 30-day plan will look different for everyone. Success does not mean you need to be perfect in your wellness journey. Success can mean that you make one step forward with either movement, connection, or both. In terms of reaping the long-term benefits, consider not just what the past 30 days looked like for you, but the next 30 days. How would you like to carry the knowledge, activities, and experiences from the last 30 days with you? What goals might you set for yourself moving forward?

Resources

If you are looking for additional resources to expand your knowledge in these domains of wellness or others, consider the options below.

Resources on social connection and positivity resonance:

- [Remaking Love: Barbara Fredrickson at TEDxLowerEastSide](#) (as used in research by Zhou et al., 2022)
- *Love 2.0: Creating Happiness and Health in Moments of Connection* by Barbara L. Fredrickson, Ph.D. (2014)

Resources on happiness and well-being:

- *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being* by Martin E. P. Seligman (2012)
- *Happier: Learn the Secrets to Daily Joy and Lasting Fulfillment* by Tal Ben-Shahar (2007)

Recommended Podcasts on the NASM Podcast Network

- *Better than Fine*, hosted by Darlene Marshall
- *The NASM-CPT Podcast with Rick Richey*
- *Strong Mind, Strong Body*, hosted by Angie Miller

Movement and Physical Activity

For more information on physical activity guidelines and ways to incorporate activity into your day, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention webpage on [Physical Activity Basics](#).

For individualized support in building a structured exercise program, consider working with a local Certified Personal Trainer.

General Wellness Information

Consider working with a local or online Certified Wellness Coach for individualized support with goal setting and general wellness.

For general preventative health and well-being information, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [Prevention and Wellness](#) webpage.

About the Author

Olivia Ellis holds a B.S. in Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise, M.S. in Exercise Science, M.A. in Positive Developmental Psychology, and is a current Ph.D. student researching love. She is a Spinning® Master Instructor and international presenter and teaches graduate-level kinesiology and psychology courses. Olivia also facilitates workshops for cardiac patients on lifestyle factors that contribute to a healthy heart. She has extensive industry multi-unit management experience and contributes to some of the top fitness industry publications today. She has also contributed to the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology*. Olivia holds several fitness professional certifications and credentials.



Key terms



Health	A state of physical, mental, and social wellness and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
Movement	Any physical activity beyond one's resting energy expenditure.
Exercise	Planned physical activity that is structured and performed to produce a specific physiological outcome, such as improving health or fitness.
Positivity Resonance	An everyday interpersonal interaction considered a micro-moment of love (romantic or non-romantic) shared between people.
Prosocial Tendencies	Actions that transcend oneself- that are for the good of others.
Affect	The fundamental experience of one's emotional state or feelings.
Self-efficacy	Someone's belief in their ability to complete a task or do something complex or new.

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**THANKS FOR
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