



Create A Movement Mindset

How small shifts can make a big impact in health and well-being

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INTRODUCTION

Outside of science fiction writers, few would have imagined the way a global pandemic would create such a sudden and dramatic change to the way we work and live. And while we continue to adapt and adjust, by now most of us have figured out what works well, such as not commuting to work, and equally important, what doesn't—such as sitting on the couch, hunched over a laptop for 10-plus hours a day.

As we forge our path forward, many business leaders are looking for ways to expand benefits and address the drawbacks of our newly hybridized work/home life to improve the overall quality of employees' lives. Similarly, those same employees are trying to find the new rhythm of work, establishing different routines as they work from home, return to a changed office, or do a bit of both. As a result, and because the effects of the pandemic will far outlast the pandemic itself, it's time companies take more actionable steps to improve employees' holistic health under these circumstances. Likewise, employees also have the opportunity to develop new routines and habits that can have a lasting positive impact on their well-being.



The Downside of Too Much Sitting

With the pandemic forcing us to spend much of our time indoors, employees are at greater risk of living increasingly sedentary lifestyles. It has been well established that sitting all day is unhealthy and can have a host of long-term, detrimental effects on our bodies. Adopting a sedentary lifestyle has been linked to a slower metabolism,¹ thinning in the regions of the brain responsible for storing memory,² a higher risk of dying from cancer,³ as well as an increased incidence of depression and anxiety.⁴ As studies show that both the duration of how much we sit at a time and the total amount of time we sit overall can be problematic to our health,⁵ how can we develop a movement mindset to conquer any additional challenges to our physical and mental health?

Since we spend a majority of our day working, let's start there.

How Leaders Can Support Well-Being

Business leaders have both an ability and an obligation to help their employees stay healthy and productive wherever they work. There are a few ways they can support their teams and encourage health and safety during the pandemic.

Looking beyond the basic health requirements, it's equally important for employers to also support employees' holistic health and encourage movement in the workplace—in fact, it's in their best interest.



For employers who are bringing employees back to the office, it's important to help everyone feel a baseline level of safety. It's impossible to talk about how we move around the office today without considering the precautions that must be in place to keep workers as healthy as possible. When it comes to entering the office space, placing a thermal imaging cart near the entrance can help employers comply with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines on temperature screening and allows everyone in the building to feel safer.

Looking beyond the basic health requirements, it's equally important for employers to also support employees' holistic health and encourage movement in the workplace—in fact, it's in their best interest. Sitting less and moving more has been linked to increased productivity,⁶ a major benefit amid significant changes to employees' daily routines. High-quality, height-adjustable office furniture creates a comfortable, personalized fit for each user. These features are especially beneficial as workplaces look to decrease the number of assigned desks in favor of “hotel” or “touchdown” options. Professional-grade mobile desks allow people to meet and collaborate while safely remaining six feet (or further) apart. Offices can also add arrows to help direct traffic, decrease any potential congestion and maintain distance between employees.

As work from home policies are extended or even made permanent, employers must encourage movement at home during working hours, too. Employees sitting on the couch for months on end could experience damaging effects to their health, including back and neck pain. To help alleviate this problem, companies are providing stipends to allow team members to set up a comfortable and healthy home office, giving employees the flexibility to choose what works best for them and their own space.

Options like a mobile desk allow for smooth movement from one area of the home to another, and for those living in cramped apartment spaces, standing desk converters like Ergotron's WorkFit®-Z Mini help transform existing desks or tables into flexible, height-adjustable office furniture without sacrificing much additional space. For those permanently working from home, wall-mounted desks like the Ergotron WorkFit Elevate™ are a great option when floor space is at a premium.

With these tools, employees are better equipped to adopt a movement mindset and positioned to work productively while maintaining good health and safety. However, having the right setup is only one part of the equation.

Making Healthy Changes Stick

For many of us, sitting is our default setting. Phrases like “have a seat” and “pull up a chair” are ubiquitous in our culture, and it takes effort to shift a sitting mindset when we’ve been conditioned to equate sitting with comfort. So, how can we change the way we think and act to make movement a top priority? By understanding the science of habit change, as discussed by James Clear in his best-selling book, *Atomic Habits* (2018), we can learn to break the bad ones and create new, beneficial ones.

Habits are ingrained for a reason. From an evolutionary standpoint, the more lower-level processing and decision-making your brain can offload to automatic habits, the more resources it has available to figure out tougher problems and keep you safe from danger. In his book, Clear

explains that the best way to change these habits is by making small changes to your daily routine, one at a time. While making these tiny adjustments may seem insignificant in the moment, what you’re actually doing is creating new systems that make a healthier end result possible, which means tangible and sustainable improvement over time. As the author notes, “You should be more concerned with your current trajectory than with your current results.”





ONCE YOU DECIDE WHO YOU ARE AND THEN PROVE IT TO YOURSELF WITH THE SMALL, DAILY ACTIONS YOU TAKE, YOU'LL CREATE LASTING CHANGE.

Effective habit change is, at its root, an identity change. Shifting your habits toward a movement mindset means you're no longer a person who sits for 10 or more hours a day and wishes to be more active. You *are* an active person. Once you decide who you are and then prove it to yourself with the small, daily actions you take, you'll create lasting change. You can use concepts like the Four Laws of Behavior Change—Make it Obvious, Make it Attractive, Make it Easy, and Make it Satisfying⁷—to help you get there.

MAKE IT OBVIOUS: When deciding on the habit you want to change, it's important to be specific. It can be difficult to act on a goal such as, "I'm going to sit less next week," because it's vague. Instead, develop concrete goals, such as, "For all of my conference calls on Tuesday, I'll stand at my desk for the duration

of the meeting," or, "I'll walk around the block twice with my partner at 5:30 p.m. every Wednesday." It can also be helpful to layer these new habits on top of older, established habits to leverage the momentum you already have and help to cement the new action. For example, you may set a goal of doing a 30-minute workout as soon as you power down your computer on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The final element of making it obvious is designing your environment to make desired habits easier to achieve:

- Set out exercise clothes before you go to bed so that you see them when you wake up and are encouraged to get in a morning workout.
- Put your TV remote in the closet so you aren't as tempted to just sit down on the couch when you walk by it.
- Get a standing desk to make it easy to move more while remaining productive. Leave the desk adjusted to standing height when you finish work in the evening so that you're encouraged to stand when you start again in the morning.

MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE: It's a lot easier to build good habits if you can find ways to make those habits more enticing. Try tying the action you need to do with an action you want to do—only allow yourself to scroll through social media while you're standing, or only listen to your favorite podcast while you're cleaning the house. You could also find people who are pursuing similar goals to help hold yourself accountable to your new habits. As social animals, we seek community, and finding a community with the shared identity of “we're active people” will help you internalize that identity as your own. Another way to make healthy habits more attractive is to reframe them in your mind. Instead of thinking, “I have to exercise,” try saying, “I get to exercise.” Highlight the benefits of the action you want to take by thinking, “time to increase my endurance!” or, “time to rev up my energy levels!”



Instead of switching between sitting and standing every 30 minutes for the duration of the workday, start with standing for two minutes today.

MAKE IT EASY: At the beginning, scale new habits down to the smallest thing you can accomplish in two minutes. If you start with these tiny habits, it's much easier to expand them. Instead of attempting to run a 5k as a brand new runner, you could start with just putting on running shoes. Instead of switching between sitting and standing every 30 minutes for the duration of the workday, start with standing for two minutes today. Though these small goals seem insignificant, it's simpler to improve upon an established habit than to try and sprint to the finish line.

Remember, you're creating a new identity around being an active person. Each little action you establish as a habit builds on that identity. As you're getting started, take some mindful actions that will help promote these habits over and over again—it could help to purchase new running shoes or a standing desk.

MAKE IT SATISFYING: Our brains are set up to love instant gratification, but that can make health and fitness habits tough to stick to because the payoff of better endurance, stronger muscles, and good nutrition takes a while to materialize. Try the next best thing: provide immediate positive reinforcement for your good habits. Every time you walk after work, put \$5 in your "treat" fund, and once you've put in the requisite mileage, treat yourself to a massage. You're taking care of your body twice over this way, and eventually the intrinsic motivation will take over and the sustained habit will become a part of your identity without any need for external motivation.

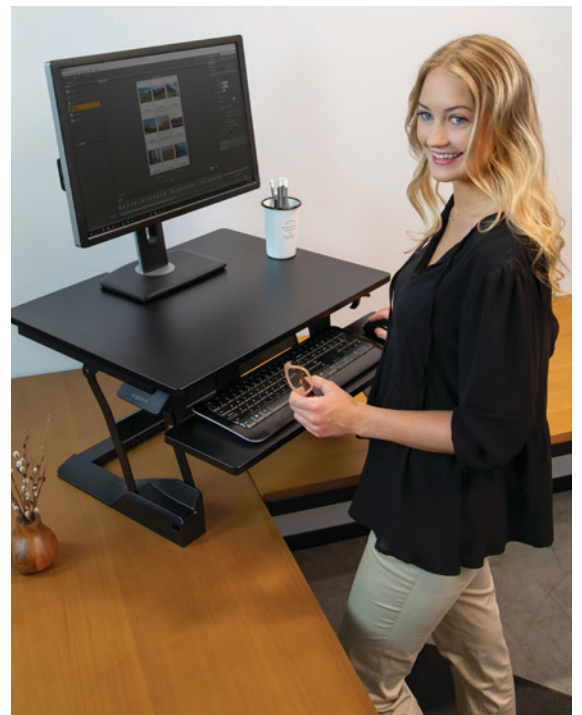


CONCLUSION

With many of us thrown off our normal routines, we're trying to find different ways to stay healthy and safe in this current reality. Sitting hunched over our laptops on our couches for hours on end will not cut it as a long-term solution and may lead to seriously damaging side effects down the line.

It's the responsibility of employers to ensure that employees have the tools they need to maintain their health both inside and out of the brick-and-mortar office as the lines between home and office are blurred. Getting a more comfortable and ergonomic office setup at home will support employees' health and productivity during a time when rampant anxiety and a hectic news cycle make it easy to get distracted. Of course, it's also up to the individual to build better habits to bolster physical and mental health. Taking the time and making the effort to cultivate good habits and build a new identity as "an active person" will change the way we live for the better.

In this moment in time, we have the unique opportunity to work together to ensure that we're all staying as mentally and physically healthy as we can. Ideally, by making these adjustments, we cultivate good health and resilience, preparing ourselves for whatever changes we encounter in the future.



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Adopting a movement culture is easier with the right tools. Ergotron's professional-grade movement solutions are designed to change the office environment and create spaces that offer freedom to move, choice and autonomy—the building blocks of a dynamic organization that's actively moving forward. Are you ready to make your move? Learn more at ergotron.com.

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