



Energizing Indoor Exercise Options

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Despite the milder temperatures we've experienced this fall, New Englanders like myself are prepared for another challenging winter, though, even if we get five feet of snow, it will seem like a piece of cake compared to last winter! Achieving sufficient exercise throughout the week can certainly be a challenge for local residents, since so many of us cherish the milder temperatures of the spring, summer, and fall. The good news is that there are plenty of indoor options for those like myself who aren't huge fans of 'braving the elements.' This month, let's take a look at two options that are suitable for all fitness levels.

Bodyweight exercises performed in the comfort of your own home, particularly those that involve multiple muscle groups (i.e. Bodyweight Squats) tend to burn the greatest number of calories. Squats possess multiple benefits including improving muscle tone/lower body aesthetics, burning fat by way of increasing lean muscle mass, and improving lower body 'power.' Practically speaking, you would see improvements in your ability to move quickly as you perform everyday tasks such as going up and down stairs, getting in and out of your car, and getting up and down from your chair at work/home.



Another reason I encourage implementing squats in an at-home exercise routine is that they can be modified for various fitness levels. For example, if someone has limited ankle and/or hip mobility, placing one or more cushions on a chair can limit the range of motion (ROM) of the squat, thus making them slightly less challenging. Unlike many (expensive) exercise machines at the gym, squats require no equipment and work all of your lower body muscles. They don't isolate one specific muscle like many machines do, hence why I love people trying them. A simple prescription for squats, like other bodyweight exercises, is 1-3 rounds of 8-12 repetitions. From a standing position with your feet pointed forward and tall posture, begin the descend by driving your hips back as if to sit down on the chair. After feeling contact with the chair, begin the ascend while maintaining good posture. Remember to drive through the heels (not the toes) in order to effectively target the larger leg muscles throughout the thighs and Gluteal muscles. Practice this movement 2-3 days/week and increase your ROM as you become more comfortable with the movement. As with all forms of exercise, start slow and progress at a comfortable pace. Make sure to implement modifications when needed (i.e. if a specific pose causes pain or if you have a history of injury with your back, knees, hips, etc..) These modifications should be taught by your instructor or certified personal trainer.

Yoga is another wonderful form of exercise to incorporate this winter. It not only works the physical self by way of strengthening your muscles and improving flexibility, but it also strengthens the mental self by way of improving focus as there is a concentration on breath work. Yoga is a fantastic practice to implement, particularly at this high-stress time of year as it can help combat stress, anxiety, and fatigue.



Keep the movement slow and controlled about 3 - 4 seconds lowering and lifting. Don't round your back, keep your chest lifted and engage your abs to protect your back, never let your knees pass over your toes this can damage tendons and cartilage.

Like the squats I mentioned earlier, there is a wide range of yoga styles, some with more of a meditative focus, others with more emphasis on flexibility, balance, and strength. A major key to starting out would be to research a beginner style you wish to focus on, such as ‘Anusara’ or ‘Integral.’ The best place to start would be to review [this list](#) of the most common yoga styles practiced in the United States. For those taking a yoga class for the first time, the most important step is to speak with the instructor prior to beginning. Explain your background, so that he/she can review any necessary modifications needed based on your capabilities.

Many people I’ve worked with as personal training clients over the years have tried yoga. Some have maintained their practice, while others have moved on to other activities. I implemented yoga to improve my balance, but I also became *a lot* stronger- kind of an unintentional ‘two birds with one stone’ exercise benefit- which I had *no* problem with! Recently, [a blog post on ‘The Huffington Post’](#) described the many positive lifestyle changes a yoga participant achieved after trying yoga for sixty days.

This month, consider integrating squats and yoga into your exercise routine and enjoy both the physical and mental benefits. Both forms of physical activity engage multiple major muscle groups and help manage the heightened levels of stress and anxiety we can experience around the holidays. Most importantly, start slow and stay conservative with your practice and increase your frequency over time.



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