A guide from *Thrive Adult Primary Care*

Why Lift Weights If You're Struggling to Lift Yourself?

Move With Intention:

A plain-language guide to building real strength and mobility, without a gym

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IMPORTANT NOTE:

This guide is educational and general in nature.
It isn't personalized medical advice, and it doesn't replace a conversation with your own physician — especially if you have an existing health condition,
or if it's been a while since you've moved your body with any intensity.

What "Intentional Movement" Really Means

Some people call this "exercise," but it does not require a gym membership or scheduled workouts. That's not what this is about.

Others call it "physical activity." But movement isn't just physical — it affects your mood, your focus, and how connected you feel to people. It just has to involve your muscles to count.

Moving with intention means moving in a way that engages your whole body and your whole mind at the same time. What happens in your body affects your mind, and what happens in your mind affects your body — they're not separate systems.

The easiest way to do this: find a type of movement you genuinely enjoy. It's even better if it involves other people or living things.

Ways to Move With Intention

Proven ways to build movement into a full life:

- **Sports** — and genuine enjoyment matters
- **Dancing** — alone or with others
- **Caring for** someone or something that matters to you — kids, pets, aging parents, your home or yard
- **Sex**, in a mutually loving relationship — yes, this counts!
- **Walking, biking, or jogging** to get somewhere, instead of always driving

As much as you can, use your body
to get from "here" to "there."

Building Strength With Just Your Body

You don't need a gym, a class, or equipment to build real strength. All you need is your body and some awareness of how it moves.

A good place to start is your core. If it feels weak, pick a movement that challenges it — gently at first.

Before almost any movement, it helps to brace your body first. I call this **the Superhero Stance** — a quick way to stabilize your spine from top to bottom before you load it...

The "SuperHero Stance"

Upper back and neck: Squeeze your shoulder blades together, keeping your elbows at your sides — this naturally lifts your chest. Then tuck your chin straight back (not down) and keep your eyes looking forward. Don't overdo it — the goal is better posture, not the opposite extreme.

Midsection: Pull your belly button in toward your spine — the "suck in your gut" feeling.

Lower back and hips: Squeeze your glutes, and also tighten from below like you're trying to stop yourself from using the bathroom (sometimes called a "Kegel" squeeze).

Hold that braced position for a count of 10, then relax. Repeat before each set.

Build core strength and improve posture.

Stretching: The Other Half of Strength

Every time you strengthen a muscle by contracting it, that same muscle deserves to be stretched.

A simple rule: spend a few minutes stretching after you move, holding each position long enough to actually feel the muscle lengthen.

Optimize joint mobility.

Like strength training, stretching and mobility work is best learned with a coach or trainer, at least at first. A good guide is one of the best investments you can make in your body.

Getting Started (Even When It's Awkward)

Muscle soreness in the days after a workout is a normal part of getting stronger. Learning to tell that kind of discomfort apart from pain that signals real damage is one of the most useful skills you can build.

If you miss a day, or a few days, because life got in the way — don't waste energy feeling bad about it. Just start again. That's a better use of your energy than guilt.



Starting something new is awkward for everyone, no exceptions. Every expert started as a beginner. If it's been a while since you've moved your body on purpose, expect it to feel clumsy at first. Keep going anyway — it won't stay that way.

If you're trying a new kind of movement, start with a coach or trainer if you can. A good one does two things: makes sure your core is engaged no matter what body part you're working, and helps you learn to feel — on your own — when a movement is under control. That's what lets you keep going safely without supervision.

The Truth About Cardio

It helps to know why you're doing cardio before you just start doing it.

That said, if you're not sure why yet, it's fine to just start moving while you figure that out.

Longevity, weight loss, and performance are three different goals — and the right training looks different for each one.

Heart Rate Zones

The single best tool for building an effective routine is knowing your heart rate zones. Find your zones here:

https://thriveapc.com/heart-rate-zone-calculator/

Your exercise tolerance changes as your fitness level improves, and your goals themselves may shift over time. This means your routine may need to change too, so leave room to reassess and adjust when that happens.

Whatever your zones turn out to be, the same question from the start of this chapter still applies: know your why first. The numbers just tell you how to get there.



The Truth About Strength Training

Why lift weights if I'm struggling to lift myself?

Bodyweight training is free, requires no equipment, and doesn't need much space. Getting strong can start — and finish — with a small patch of floor and maybe a chair, if your goal is building lean muscle.

If you're a competitive athlete, your training goals are usually clear. For everyone else, *it's worth pausing to think* before walking into a gym without a plan.

The right questions can help you find your starting point — especially if you're middle-aged or older, or deal with any kind of movement difficulty:

- How easily can I get up off the ground?
- How easy is it for me to go up and down stairs?
- Can I fully squat, then stand back up, without strain?
- How long can I hold a plank?
- How long can my arms support my full body weight — hanging from a bar, or holding an L-sit?
- How hard is it for me to jump? How high can I jump?

If several of these feel genuinely hard, that's worth listening to. It's a sign to build a foundation with a trainer before adding external weight — lifting weight may not be the wisest starting point if you're still struggling to fully control your own bodyweight.

The good news: you don't need a gym membership to close that gap. Simple, effective bodyweight or light-dumbbell programs can be done at home, guided by a well-vetted online program — cheaper, faster to start, and less of a time commitment than a traditional gym routine.

Just a few examples:

- **LeoMoves** — bodyweight strength and mobility training, built around movement quality rather than machines.
  https://www.leomoves.com/

- **Madelaine Rascan** (YouTube) — free, no-equipment home workouts.
  https://www.youtube.com/@madelainerascan

- **Kinstretch with Beard** — a structured mobility and joint-health training program, with free sample classes on YouTube.
  https://www.beardthebestyoucanbe.com/

I have no financial relationship with any of these — no sponsorships, no affiliate links. I've simply come across them and think they're great examples of where to start in the search for training that works for *you*.

A trainer or physical therapist is still the right first step if you want your specific limitations properly assessed.

Muscle is what keeps your metabolism efficient. It also weighs more than fat — exactly why the scale can be misleading. Don't let one isolated number define your progress.

A Few Things Worth Remembering

Moving with intention isn't about a workout schedule. It's about building strength, mobility, and awareness into a life you're already living — the same way Consume With Intention isn't about counting calories, but about paying attention to what you put in your body.

Both come down to the same idea: small, consistent choices, done with awareness, beat any perfect plan you can't sustain.

You only get one body in this life.

Care for it intentionally.

The rest follows.

If a physician who thinks about your health this way sounds like what you've been looking for —
we're here when you're ready.

www.thriveapc.com

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Your goals. Your physiology. Finally.