

FITNESS FOR OVER 40's AND BEYOND



Think you are too old to move and workout?

There are some definite biological differences between your 20's and 40's and of course your life is different, you may have more responsibilities and less time for yourself.

This does not necessarily mean you cannot create some fantastic gains in your strength and fitness over a period of time.

Setting yourself small goals to start, i.e. I will aim to lift weights/run twice every week for the next month to break it down and make it more doable, will pay off in the long run as you create a habit in consistency which builds long term sustainability in strength and fitness.

Ok, you got me but where do I start?

Beginner or never exercised before? I would HIGHLY recommend you hire yourself a good coach who has experience with clients aged over 40. Looking for a coach? Check out [Body Positive Fitness Finder](#) for a list of worldwide awesome coaches.



Image Courtesy: Real Body Fitness Photos

If you want to go it alone and/or have been dabbling in the gym or your chosen sport/movement and you want some real, tangible and actionable tips to help you improve your performance then you are in the right place.

I want to firstly start by talking about the Mind-Body Connection.

We are all wired to feel.

However, life can get in the way and we forget to tune inward. I find with many over 40 clients they have been effectively tuning out of their own body for many years and it is then my job to teach them to tune back in.

This brings me to my first learning.

1. BE FULLY PRESENT AT YOUR WORKOUT



Mind- Body Connection & Trust

Tune in, don't mindlessly workout, feel each and every muscle doing its thing.

What is it telling you?

How does each movement feel?

Does it feel like it's working, or does it feel weird?

Do you like the exercise?

If not, why?

Is it because it is hard?

Or do you need another way of doing it?

Do you need to slow down a bit?

Trust your body to know and tell you when it's time to stop or try a different way.

If it feels horrible then it's likely that;

A) It's not a great fit for you

B) You won't stick at it because it does not bring you joy.

Ok, you are ready to be fully present and tuned in, now what?

2. BEFORE EACH AND EVERY WORKOUT

Ask yourself these questions;

1. How is your energy today?
2. How do your muscles feel today?
3. Are you tight or sore from other workouts?
4. Maybe you didn't sleep well or your neck hurts from your pillow.
5. How can you work around that?
6. Women's hormones- where are you in your cycle? (currently writing another guide on this in more detail, make sure you are on my VIP list to be the first to get it> [join here](#))
7. Are you well fed?
8. Have you had enough water?



Geezz Rachelle, this list is long and boring why do I need to ask myself these questions?

Because THEY matter, and YOU matter. This list of questions can be the difference between a great workout or a crappy one. This list can also help you to decide what type of workout you will be doing today.

Tired/stressed/hormonal? Consider doing a shorter and lower intensity workout.

Sore/stiff? Consider working different muscles or changing your session up to incorporate more stretching.

Lack of food/water? Not an ideal situation to go into a movement session on and one that needs to be rectified quickly. Consider waiting until you can eat or hydrate. You will only end up feeling nauseated, depleted and lightheaded.



Feel like a change today?

Play, yep you read that right, play. All movement is good movement. Grab a ball and go outside and just kick it around or throw it at a wall or even better grab your child, partner, friend, dog and throw it to each other.

Don't have a ball?

Try some balancing work, see how long you can stand on 1 foot, hop from side to side and try and lift off from your non-dominant side.

You get the idea, just play around.

No expectation, no formal thought, just release energy by playing.

I will often schedule sessions like these into client's programs because they are fun but also a great way to relieve stress and anxiety, further enhance the mind body connection and work on agility, mindfulness and coordination.

It does not always need to be about performance!

3. THE STARTER MOTOR – Let's Rev that engine up!

From my own lived experience, we really do need to pay attention to our warmups as we hit our 40's.

When once you could sprint straight from the blocks to break out the boogie to Dancing Queen it just ain't happening these days. And come to think of it I have actually witnessed many a client do some damage to themselves on the dance floor on a Saturday night!



Image Courtesy: Real Body Fitness Photos

Warm up- at least 10min- Give it more time if you can but this is a non-negotiable if you want to STAY in your choice of movement long term.

- Mobility exercises check out my You tube channel [here](#) or google, there are thousands!
- If weight training, do the same lifts you intend to do in your session with no weight.
- Get out a resistance band and play around with it, again, you can google different ways to play or hire a coach who can help you.
- Do some gentle cardio like the bike, treadmill, walk, step etc
- Make sure you feel warm and ready. Aim for a nice steady breath without feeling huffy puffy or feeling like your muscles are burning.

4. THE MAIN EVENT

Ok so you are primed and ready to GO!!
You are warmed up and you feel FAB!
Wait, what did you say?
You feel like you have been hit with a brick
and your energy has just left the building?
This is your sign to abort the mission
friend. This is your sign to STOP.

Your body needs rest for one of many
different reasons and you would do well to
listen to it.

Go home. There is always tomorrow.

I understand, it's frustrating, right?

You really want to get it done.

You really thought today was the day.

In my experience if you push through you
are more likely to injure yourself than do
any good for your body.

Remember this movement/fitness thing is
not a race.

It is a LIFETIME of movement.

You have time friend, you have time.

Ok, you are actually feeling fab after your
warm up, what now?



Image Courtesy: Real Body Fitness Photos

GO GET IT TIGER!!

GO forth and feel like the Incredible Hulk or insert your favourite superhero here.

Enjoy your movement session and I mean really enjoy it.

Love all over it!



5. IT'S SO COOL TO COOL DOWN

It is actually very cool to cool down.

It is not cool to do the session then jump in your car and head home. Why? Because you just missed the best part about the whole darn session!

If you are doing a run/bike ride etc aim to slow down your pace somewhat and slowly ease to a stop. It's not great to go from flat out to stop in 3 seconds. Wind it down slowly.

If resistance training, again wind it down with some gentler lifts towards the end of your session. Then it is time to **STRETCH!**

This is your time to thank your body and be grateful for what it has just done.

This is your time to give back.

This is your time to reflect on what you just did and be so darn proud of it.

I am putting together a list of awesome stretches for you so stay tuned but, in the meantime, if you have some that your physio gave you ages ago, dig them out and do them or ask a coach to help you.



Aim for at least 5 min of stretching which can also encompass mindfulness and belly breathing.
Breathe in, breathe out, relax.

The aftermath

I often get people telling me their muscles feel sore in a good way when describing their next day stiffness/soreness.

This is when you know you have landed a good workout. They may be sore but should not be **OVER** sore or painful.

You will know if something does not feel right, tune in and **TRUST** your body.

While we are on that subject, just in case you do not feel stiffness or soreness it does not mean that you need to work harder or that your workout did not count.

Sometimes we have a physiological response such as soreness and stiffness and other times we do not. There are MANY factors as to why you do not feel sore, however, it not being a good enough workout or you not pushing yourself enough is NOT one of those reasons

6. YOU ARE EVERYTHING

You know the saying treat your body like a temple?

Well, it's true. From lived experience, in the past I neglected my body, I trashed it and I was very unkind to it.

Whether it is wisdom that has come with age or something else I have realised that this body, no matter what the hell I have thrown at it, it still gives to me.

It works tirelessly to keep me alive, every day.

We only have one body.

We only have one lifetime.

Be kind to your body, give back to it.

Speak to it gently.

I love being in my 40's because I finally feel like I have arrived home to this comfy place of knowing.

I am looking forward to what the future brings as I age.

And I hope are too.

Your time is NOW.



Below are some questions I was asked as I began my compilation of writing this guide. Thank you to those that have contributed, and you will find your question and answer below.

For weightlifting, does my overall workout need to be shorter, or can I do a longer workout with longer breaks between sets?

This really depends on you and the day. Follow the mind-body connection protocol listed above and decide on the day what feels best. You can mix this sort of training up each week. I.e.; Monday can be shorter and intense; Wed could be longer with 60-90sec breaks between and Friday could be a mix of both. There is no right or wrong here.

Is higher intensity ok if I keep the impact a bit lower?

Higher intensity is ok, if you are. Say wha? Do you like higher intensity? does it suit your body? Are you able to vary an exercise to accommodate if you don't like jumping? There is nothing wrong with making an exercise more accessible to you! Check out my burpee variation video [here](#)

When is joint pain or stiffness just a sign of age and when should one back off and see the doctor?

Great question: If you have moderate to severe joint pain while exercising, STOP immediately. There is something not working either within your body or with the way you are performing the exercise. If you have some mild stiffness or discomfort, ask yourself if there is a better way of performing this exercise. How can you modify or vary it, so you do not feel any discomfort? Or have you done enough of a warmup for your body?

If you have consistent pain before, during and after exercise please consult your doctor or physiotherapist.

I'm 40 and super fat. I found a trainer I like but he is much younger and definitely not aware of fat things. I am curious how the intersection of my age and my body size impacts my training. What do I need to tell me trainer?

By being really open and upfront with your trainer on how each movement feels for you will help him learn more about your body and the way it likes to move. There is nothing wrong with letting your trainer know that you need something modified or varied. There is also nothing wrong with telling your trainer that you can lift a heavier weight. For instance, I like to use the "scale of perceived exertion" in my training.

Scale of 1-10. 1 being really super easy and 10 being whoa! That was probably too hard.

You want to aim for a challenging 7 or 8 and be able to keep your form and technique throughout however the last 2 reps were a bit of a struggle but still doable.

Muscle definition does it comes from strength.

Muscle definition or defined muscles comes from building strength which is resistance based. Think push, pull, carry, squat and hinge. So, any type of movement that requires a load (external source or own body weight) is considered building strength (in a nutshell, there is more a scientific component to this that I won't go into for the purpose of this guide)

I have a really dodgy back and I am concerned about hurting myself more when moving/working out.

This is a big one and I completely get it. Our brains get scared and decide to not do the movements that upset our body.

If you can do it, hire yourself a movement coach who is qualified to teach you ways to move your body. The idea is to enable your body to enjoy movement and does not flare up that pesky back/shoulder/hip/knee because let's face it, as we age, we are going to have injuries.

And we want to be able to work with them instead of against.

When we do hire them tell them EVERYTHING. Tell them what you are feeling in your body with certain movements. Tell them if you find it too easy or too hard. Tell them you do not want to do a movement a certain way if you think it is not going to work. Tell them all of it and do not be afraid to do so. After all it is YOUR body, right?

A good coach will pitch sessions just right for you and give you encouragement to try different movements when they know you are ready and to break different movement patterns down when they know you are not.

They will stretch your limits and respect your boundaries all at once.

Why bother trying when I can no longer do what I used to?

Well, why not bother?

Why do you think you need to get back to what you could do in your 20's?

With all due respect; You are not 20 anymore, you have changed, you have evolved, and your body has too. This mindset really sets you up to not try anything. Set new goals for yourself. Think about right now and how this can affect your longevity for the years ahead.

Thank you to my friend Susan Brown for opening up the conversation and giving me the idea to write this guide. I hope you have enjoyed it!

Thank you to these awesome people who gave me their thoughts and opinions for this article and who I recommend you follow.

Sharon Moss from [@dont_eat_the_weights](#)
Melanie Stride from [@strengthambassadors](#)
Mallory Mansour Cislo from [@positivelyfitlh](#)
Laura Vineyard from [@shockyardfitness](#)
Diane Reid from [@http://theglobaldietician.com/](#)

About the Author;

Rachelle's owns and runs MEE Active on the Gold Coast, Australia.

Rachelle's philosophy is one of a holistic view of the whole-body system. She believes that our body is intricately connected as a whole and that somewhere along the line we can lose the ability to really tune into our own bodily needs, which can be related to lifestyle, mindset or other factors.

She works with people worldwide, helping them to step off the sidelines and into movement that matters through her Nervous Newbies movement and core-pelvic floor exercise programs.

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