

Awaking Your Bones

Martin Buber recorded a story of Rav Simhah Bunim, of Przysucha, who took very literally the words of our prayer that relate to physical awareness. According to the story, Rav Simhah arrived late for synagogue one Shabbat morning. When asked why he was so late, he quoted from *Pesukei d'zimra*, preliminary blessings and psalms (Psalms 35:10), which he had missed reciting because of his lateness: "All my bones shall say, who is like You, God?" How then, Rav Simhah asked, could he come to pray before his bones were all awake?

Most likely, we view the words of Psalms that Rav Simhah quoted in a metaphorical sense. However, anyone who has done yoga, or any type of intensive physical activity, knows that awakening our bones need not be simply a metaphorical act. It can be profoundly physical as well as mental, and these realms connect to the spiritual. Nowhere am I more mindful of how much yoga has awakened my bones, lengthened my spine, and grounded my stance than when I stand and prepare to say the Amidah.

Rav Kook Connects The Physical & The Spiritual

In the twentieth century, Rav Kook went much further in connecting physical and spiritual health. He claimed that physical health is in itself a value in the process of repentance and that, in each human organism, there is a constant reciprocal relationship between body and spirit. Rav Kook promoted a Zionism that strove to restore health to the body of the Jewish people so that its spiritual life could flower to its fullest. He intended this restoration to occur not only on the metaphorical level in terms of the strength of the State of Israel but also with respect to the strength of every person:

"Great is our physical demand. We need a healthy body. We dealt much with soulfulness; we forgot the holiness of the body. We neglected the physical health and strength; we forgot that we have holy flesh; no less than holy spirit..." He continues: "Our *teshuva* (repentance) will succeed only if it will be--with all its splendid spirituality--also a physical return, which produces healthy blood, healthy flesh, mighty solid bodies, a fiery spirit radiating over powerful muscles..."

Aerobic exercise

The American College of Sports Medicine defines aerobic exercise as "any activity that uses large muscle groups, can be maintained continuously, and is rhythmic in nature." It is a type of exercise that overloads the heart and lungs; causing them to work harder than at rest. The important idea behind aerobic exercise today, is to get up and get moving! There are more activities than ever to choose from, whether it is a new activity or an old one. Find something you enjoy doing that keeps your heart rate elevated for a continuous time period and get moving to a healthier life.

Indoor

- [Stair climbing](#)
- [Elliptical trainer](#)
- [Indoor rower](#)
- [Stairmaster](#)
- [Stationary bicycle](#)
- [Treadmill](#)

Outdoor

- [Cross-country skiing](#)

- Cycling
- Inline skating
- Jogging
- Nordic walking

Indoor or outdoor

- Kickboxing
- Swimming
- Jumping rope

At least 30 minutes of daily aerobic activity — such as walking, bicycling or swimming — can help you live longer and healthier. See how aerobic exercise affects your heart, lungs and blood flow. Then get motivated to reap the rewards!

How your body responds to aerobic exercise

During aerobic activity, you repeatedly move large muscles in your arms, legs and hips. You'll notice your body's responses quickly. You'll breathe faster and more deeply.

This maximizes the amount of oxygen in your blood. Your heart will beat faster, which increases blood flow to your muscles and back to your lungs. Your small blood vessels (capillaries) will widen to deliver more oxygen to your muscles and carry away waste products, such as carbon dioxide and lactic acid. Your body will even release endorphins, natural painkillers that promote an increased sense of well-being.

Weight Training 101

If you want to lose fat or change your body, one of the most important things you can do is lift weights. Diet and cardio are equally important, but when it comes to changing how your body looks, weight training wins hands down. If you've hesitated to start a strength training program, it may motivate you to know that lifting weights can:

- Help raise your metabolism. Muscle burns more calories than fat, so the more muscle you have, the more calories you'll burn all day long.
- Strengthen bones, especially important for women
- Make you stronger and increase muscular endurance
- Help you avoid injuries
- Increase your confidence and self-esteem
- Improve coordination and balance

Getting started with strength training can be confusing--what exercises should you do? How many sets and reps? How much weight? The routine you choose will be based on your fitness goals as well as the equipment you have available and the time you have for workouts.

The Basics

If you're setting up your own program, you'll need to know some basic strength training principles. These principles will teach you how to make sure you're using enough weight, determine your sets and reps and insure you're always progressing in your workouts.

1. **Overload:** To build muscle, you need to use more resistance than your muscles are used to. This is important because the more you do, the more your body is capable of doing, so you should increase your workload to avoid plateaus. In plain language, this means you should be lifting **enough weight that you can ONLY complete the desired number of reps**. You should be able to finish your last rep with difficulty but also with good form.
2. **Progression.** To avoid plateaus (or adaptation), you need to increase your intensity regularly. You can do this by increasing the amount of weight lifted, changing your sets/reps, changing the exercises and changing the type of resistance. You can make these changes on a weekly or monthly basis.
3. **Specificity.** This principle means you should train for your goal. That means, if you want to increase your strength, your program should be designed around that goal (e.g., train with heavier weights closer to your 1 RM (1 rep max)). To lose weight, choose a variety of rep ranges to target different muscle fibers.
4. **Rest and Recovery.** Rest days are just as important as workout days. It is during these rest periods that your muscles grow and change, so make sure you're not working the same muscle groups 2 days in a row.

Before you get started on setting up your routine, keep a few key points in mind:

1. **Always warm up** before you start lifting weights. This helps get your muscles warm and prevent injury. You can warm up with light cardio or by doing a light set of each exercise before going to heavier weights.
2. **Lift and lower your weights slowly.** Don't use momentum to lift the weight. If you have to swing to get the weight up, chances are you're using too much weight.
3. **Breathe.** Don't hold your breath and make sure you're using full **range of motion** throughout the movement.
4. **Stand up straight.** Pay attention to your posture and engage your abs in every movement you're doing to keep your balance and protect your spine.

Your first step in setting up a routine is to choose exercises to target all of your muscle groups. If you need guidance, you can:

For beginners, you want to choose about 8-10 exercises, which comes out to about one exercise per muscle group. The list below offers some examples. In the beginning it is best to hire a personal trainer that you can find in any gym to guide you through these and other helpful exercises.

- Chest: bench press, chest press machine, pushups, pec deck machine



- Back: one-armed row, seated row machine, back extensions, lat pulldowns



- Shoulders: overhead press, lateral raise, front raise



- Biceps: bicep curls, hammer curls, concentration curls



- Triceps: tricep extensions, dips, kickbacks



- Quadriceps: Squats, lunges, leg extension and leg press machines



- Hamstrings: deadlifts, lunges, leg curl machine

- Abs: crunches, reverse crunches, oblique twists, pelvic tilts



Check out the strength training and cardio workouts available at [Workout Central](#)

Sequence of Exercises

- Make sure you choose at least one exercise for each major muscle group.
- The muscles to work include: Chest, back, shoulders, biceps, triceps, quadriceps, hamstrings, calves and abdominals.
- If you leave any muscle group out, this could cause an imbalance in your muscles and possibly lead to injuries.

Most experts recommend starting with your larger muscle groups and then proceeding to the smaller muscle groups. The most demanding exercises are those performed by your large muscle groups and you will need your smaller muscles to get the most out of these exercises. But, don't feel limited by that. You can do your exercises in any order you like and changing the order is a great way to challenge yourself in different ways.

How Much Weight To Use

The easiest way to determine how much weight you should use on each lift is to guess (not very scientific, huh?):

- Pick up a light weight and do a warm up set of the exercise of your choice, aiming for about 10 to 16 repetitions.
- For set 2, increase your weight by 5 or more pounds and perform your goal number of repetitions. If you can do more than your desired number of reps, heavy up again for your 3rd set.
- In general, you should be lifting enough weight that you can **ONLY** do the desired reps. You should be struggling by the last rep, but still able to finish it with good form.
- It may take awhile to find the right amount of weight for each exercise.
- In general, you can use heavier weights with larger muscle groups such as chest, back and legs. You'll need smaller weights for the shoulders and arms.