Joyful Movement

by Christa bitner

Springtime brings longer days, warmer weather, and more opportunities to play outside. Parks are filled with children running, jumping, chasing, and rolling in the grass. Dogs wrestle, fetch balls, and gleefully investigate the surroundings with noses high and tails wagging. Among these endearing scenes are some adults lazily lounging, some throwing a Frisbee or football, a few are hula hooping, and still others are jogging or walking. In observing the variety of activities, there is a noticeable joy radiating from most of the children and the dogs, less so in the adults. I wonder, “When do we lose our sense of joyful movement? When did movement become more about fitness or a task to check off the list?”

We know physical activity is important for maintaining health, but who said it can’t be fun and playful? This month, as many of us are participating in Movement Matters, we may find ourselves with personal and team goals to move more regularly and with increased frequency. As we consider this year’s challenge to create sustainable movement, might we consider how to find increased joy in those movements as well? While the title of the campaign is “Movement Matters”, the underlying motivation is to bring awareness to the benefits of physical activity. With conversion charts and apps available for documenting every move you make throughout the month, I encourage you to consider what type of movements bring you joy?

The Masterpiece definition of physical activity is “moving your body through space”. This broad definition leaves plenty of room for creativity, self-expression, and finding the movement that really brings joy and nourishes the soul. Furthermore, when the movement is something we enjoy, we increase odds for success in engaging regularly. Consider this, as a child, did you have a “to do” list that reminded you to play outside? To play tag? To run and jump and climb trees? Of course not! Your body wanted to do it; your soul required it! Children don’t have to make a point to exercise because they innately find joy in moving their bodies through space.

This month, I challenge you to find joyful movement, and I hope it’s so inspiring you cannot stop for the rest of the year! To help get you started, here are some questions for finding what movement brings you joy:

* What activities did you enjoy as a child?
* Consider the moments when you find yourself entirely present. What are you doing in those moments?
* Is there a type of movement you have enjoyed in the past but have not participated in recently?
* Is there a type of movement you always wanted to engage in but never did?
* Can you find a way to incorporate aspects of the movements you love into your daily routine? (For example, if you love to dance, is there a Zumba class you could participate in? Could you turn on some music and dance while cleaning your living space a la “Pippy Longstocking”?)

Here are some examples of movement that may spark your interest:

Hiking, horseback riding, hula hooping, dancing, roller skating or roller blading, yoga, biking, climbing, Conductorcise, playing with children, swimming, basketball, baseball, soccer, tennis, golf, yoga, Pilates.

Whatever movement you choose, I encourage you to find a way to express joy throughout and observe your personal experience of joyful movement!