

Smart meetings

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Fast Fitness

By Julie Keller

In a perfect world, we'd all exercise for an hour a day, eat right and get enough sleep. But most often during meetings—with their multiple strategy sessions, team-building activities, evening events and more—those healthy priorities can fly out the window. Thankfully, most experts agree that a speedy and simple workout routine can still impact health and wellness. So during your next event, encourage your attendees to devote just 15 to 20 minutes to exercise, and you'll reap countless rewards.

"Working out, even for a short time, has huge implications for a busy traveler, from reducing stress to weight management to strengthening the heart and lungs," says Mark Verstegen of Core Performance, a training and lifestyle brand built by experts who train professional athletes in every major sport. "As someone who has to travel a lot for work myself, I find that a workout is a great way to refocus my energy, release stress and be more productive throughout the day."

Verstegen is the creator of the new Sheraton Fitness Programmed by Core Performance program for Sheraton Hotels. The partnership has a number of fast fitness elements, including custom-designed gyms that feature 20-minute themed training programs, such as Jet Lag Buster (for long travel days), Meeting Manager (for the conclusion of the business day) and Road Warrior (for the incessant traveler). All are outlined in detail through wall signage in the fitness centers. The program also includes 30-minute guest-room workouts, which are available for free on-demand 24 hours a day.

Additionally, Guests can order a complimentary workout in a bag, which includes workout cards, a workout mat, foam rolls, a stretch rope and a massage stick that are delivered to the room. The kit also includes customized Core Performance training programs that can be completed in the privacy of the guest room using the equipment provided in the bag. Ideal for those looking for a quick workout, the program recently launched at

select U.S. properties, including the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown, the Sheraton Seattle and the Sheraton Fisherman's Wharf (San Francisco), and will continue to roll out worldwide throughout 2009.

Fred DeVito, vice president of mind body training at Exhale, a high-end workout, spa and wellness company that has facilities in Venice and Santa Monica, Calif., as well as in several cities throughout the country, suggests a workout DVD as an ideal fast fitness option, which can be a great in-room gift for attendees. He co-founded (along with his wife Lis) all of the Core Fusion classes that are taught at Exhale outposts. The buzz-worthy and effective workout combines the Lotte Berk Method, Pilates, yoga, dance and Tai Chi disciplines, and is said to be a life- and body-changing experience.



Julie Keller is editor-in-chief of American Spa, an award-winning magazine that reports on the national and international spa marketplace.

The company recently released the DVD Exhale: Core Fusion Pilates Plus and Exhale: Core Fusion Body Sculpt, each of which feature five 10-minute segments designed to deliver results with toning and sculpting exercises. As DeVito says, "we hold our issues in our tissues," so releasing muscle tension can have a great impact on a meeting's stress level. "Between time zone changes, eating out, sleeping in a foreign environment, work-related stress, travel delays and just basically being out of a routine, there is a lot of stress on the physical, mental and emotional health of an individual," he says. "A fitness routine, even a relatively short one, can help to reduce that stress and the impact stress has on the body."

Still, according to all of the experts, it is possible to create an in-room workout that requires nothing but the weight of the body and perhaps a workout band or light set of weights, which can be easily packed into a suitcase or provided for guests upon arrival. Donovan Almond, fitness and activities manager and master trainer at Solage Calistoga (Calistoga, Calif.), says an easy 15-minute workout that focuses on multiple muscle groups and gives you the most "bang for your buck," includes one to two sets with 10 to 20 reps each of the following.

1. Squat into a shoulder press with band or dumbbells
2. Narrow push-ups into a downward dog yoga pose
3. Lunges
4. Rows with a band
5. Bicep curls with a band
6. Jumping jacks
7. Crunches on the floor
8. Spiderman walk with yoga twist

Almond has also hosted 15-minute stretching and ab classes as a mid-meeting break for groups. Other fun options include hikes or bike trips around the property; scavenger hunts, which provide fresh air and exercise as well as team building; and a make-your-own three-minute workout challenge.

DeVito adds that any 15-minute group workout should involve breathing drills to clear the mind and energize the spirit, followed by a short sequence of stretches for the neck, shoulders, arms, back and legs. Other good group stretching options, including rolling a tennis ball under the arches of the feet to relieve tension from the back of the ankles and the lower back; neck stretches that involve holding the stretch for 10–15 seconds; and a seated hamstring stretch where the toes are pulled to the shin while legs are extend at the knee. "All of these can be done standing at the conference table using the chair," DeVito says.

RESOURCES

Exhale
exhalespa.com

Sheraton Hotels
sheraton.com

Solage Calistoga
solagecalistoga.com