

TOO BUSY!

by | Matthew McNutt

FOR EXERCISE

[Tending|the Temple]



Like many frustrated gamers out there who want to get their sweat on without leaving the comfort of their living rooms, I've been hoping to get a hold of Nintendo's Wii Fit.



Just in case you're the one who hasn't heard of it, here's what Wii Fit is: It's an exercise video game that makes use of a unique controller peripheral, the Balance Board. Looking kind of like a bathroom scale, the Balance Board is used for a variety of exercises, yoga positions, and even games such as skiing and boxing. By keeping track of the user's center of gravity, weight, and balance, the game is able to help guide the user to a more balanced health.

Can you imagine? A video game that tells you know when your center of gravity is off—a warning sign to avoid crashing and burning!

I wish it were that easy.

Wouldn't it be nice to have balance boards in our offices that let us know where our spiritual and physical centers of gravity are? Let's be honest: Youth ministry is a weird lifestyle. I don't know about you, but my schedule is all over the place. Some days I'm out early; others I'm out late at meetings. There's no consistency to my routine.

And it's easy to sacrifice my health for the job. After all, there's no end to the list of ministry opportunities that seem more important than my time in the gym. For crying out loud, I have a hard enough challenge making room for my quiet times

let alone pounding out an hour on the treadmill!

And trust me, I know it's hard to keep balance in health. I'll be fighting that battle for the rest of my life. I write articles about health, speak frequently on the subject, and give advice to people almost daily—and yet

I'm in the middle of waking up to the fact that my own balance is out of whack.

A while back I fractured my ankle. I'm horrified to admit that it happened after I tripped over absolutely *nothing*—and in the church parking lot, no less. Yeah, that did wonders for my pride. If I had to end up on crutches, it would have been a lot better to have a decent reason for it, like

paintball or fighting off crazy ninjas. Hey, it could happen—be ready in and out of season, I always say.

God created our bodies in such a way that we need physical activity on a daily basis to stay healthy and balanced both mentally and spiritually. We sleep better, our bodies run more smoothly, and our stress levels even go down—to name just a few of the reasons we need exercise.

But with my fractured ankle, it means I need to be a little more creative since my favorite activities are all off limits for the time being. But here's the other snag: My senior pastor has been on sabbatical over the last six months, and I've been pulling double duty. The frustrating thing is that I didn't make a choice to stop exercising—I just let my world steamroll it away. There was some crisis or meeting or "must attend" event that kept getting in the way. I'd put off my morning workout until evening, then I'd be too tired or my ankle would be throbbing too much, so I'd put it off until the next morning...until I woke up the other day and realized it had been six weeks since I'd set foot in the gym.

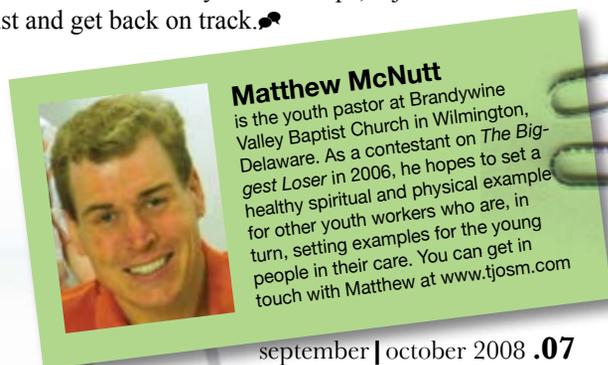
And I can feel it. The scale is up. My irritability is skyrocketing. My joy is sapped. My body feels lethargic and bloated. God designed us to be spiritually and physically healthy, and when one of those two is off balance, the other suffers as well. Somewhere along the line I lost sight of the fact that making time for my health *is* ministry to the church and the youth I'm called to serve. In keeping my health balanced I'm better able to shepherd these young people.

But as a youth pastor with a bizarre schedule, it takes intentionality, planning, and accountability. It means I've started scheduling exercise before the week fills up and then protecting that time. It means that I've actually admitted my need to get back on track to key friends who'll help keep me accountable.

I love the passages on running a race well (1 Corinthians 9, Hebrews 12) because I have to constantly remind myself that my health and giving glory to God through the care of my temple more like a marathon than a sprint.

I haven't lost the race when my balance slips, it just means I need to readjust and get back on track. 🏃

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Matthew McNutt

is the youth pastor at Brandywine Valley Baptist Church in Wilmington, Delaware. As a contestant on *The Biggest Loser* in 2006, he hopes to set a healthy spiritual and physical example for other youth workers who are, in turn, setting examples for the young people in their care. You can get in touch with Matthew at www.tjism.com