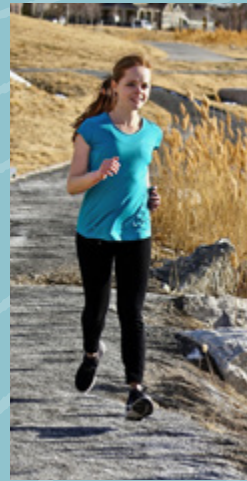
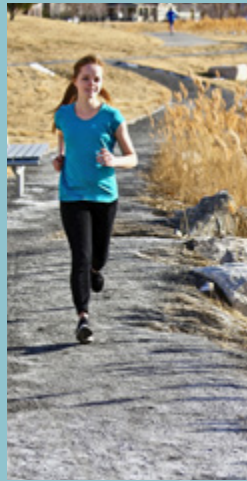
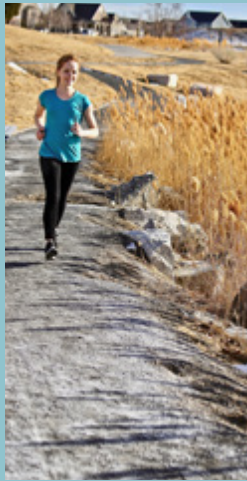
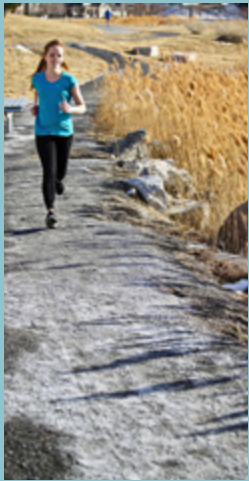




EXERCISING
Faith



THOUGH MY BODY IS IMPERFECT, AS I HAVE TAKEN CARE OF IT AND SEEN IT AS A TEMPLE, MY LIFE HAS CHANGED FOR THE BETTER.

By Rachel Roy

RUNNING LAPS AGAIN?!

To say I used to hate exercise is an understatement. Just about any form of exercise was uncomfortable. In my middle school gym class, we had to run laps around the field to complete a mile and a half. We also did other exercises to build endurance, strength, and flexibility. All of it was incredibly hard. And all of it took me a long time to do.

There was a reason things were so challenging. I was born with Cystic Fibrosis (CF), which is a genetically inherited terminal illness.

My condition causes mucus to build up in my lungs. My body also has a hard time absorbing nutrients. Because of this, I need lung treatments every morning and night to keep my airways clear. I also take a series of medications throughout the day. I've always done this. However, my life seriously improved once I added a couple of extra health habits. And yes, one is daily exercise!



My treatment for cystic fibrosis includes airway clearance, medication, and fitness.

COMBINING MOVEMENT WITH MUSIC

Everything started to change in my life when I found something I genuinely loved to do. While in high school, I discovered dancing. The first time I combined movement with music and put my whole energy into dancing, I knew I'd found something special.

When I first started to dance, I experienced the same discomforts I had while running laps in middle school. This time, though, my new passion for dancing made all the difference. I felt carried away as my feet pounded and leapt to the rhythms and beats of the music. I was able to express myself freely through a variety of movements, feeling uplifted and empowered.

I took entry-level dance classes at school and danced as much as possible. The longer I kept at it, the more I noticed big changes in my health. My lung function grew stronger and steadier. As I continued staying active through doing what I loved, I was able to accomplish much more than I'd ever dreamed.

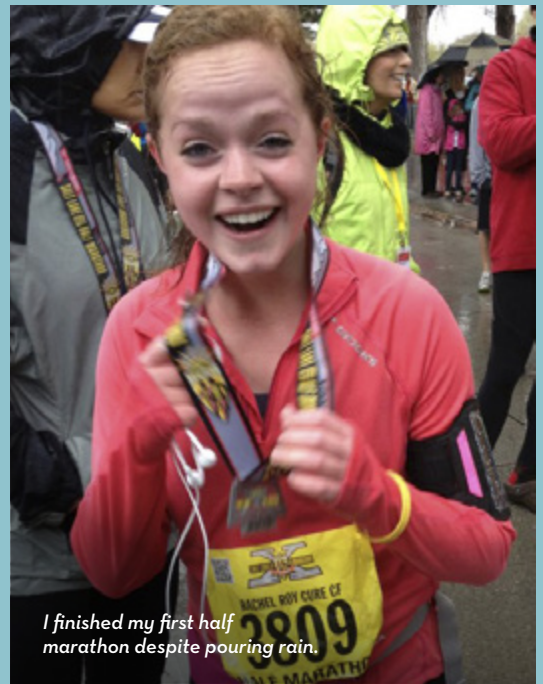
FINDING THE WHY FOR EXERCISE

I'd been taught my whole life that my body is a temple. But I hadn't really considered how this means both avoiding harmful things (drugs, alcohol, coffee, tea, etc.) but also *doing* the healthy things my body needs.

President Russell M. Nelson has taught: "With your body being such a vital part of God's eternal plan, it is little wonder that the Apostle Paul described it as a 'temple of God' [1 Corinthians 3:16]. Each time you look in the mirror, see your body as your temple. That truth—refreshed gratefully each day—can positively influence your decisions about how you will care for your body and how you will use it. And those decisions will determine your destiny."¹

As I took care of my body and saw it as a temple, my life changed for the better. Breathing was easier, my energy increased, and I became more alert to my surroundings. My body weight increased to a healthy level, which I could better maintain because my lungs weren't working so hard.

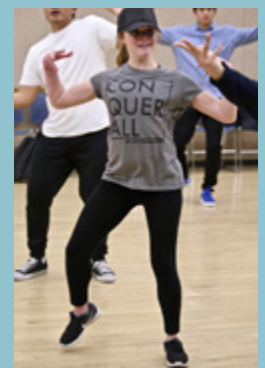
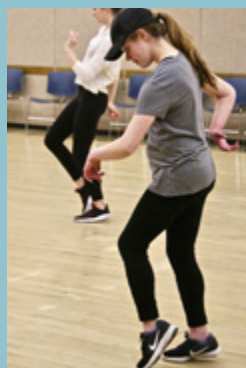
Before, I had always experienced a health crash at least once a year and needed a two-week hospital stay to restore my health. But after I started dancing and taking better care of myself, that need disappeared. I went six or seven years without having to stay in a hospital.

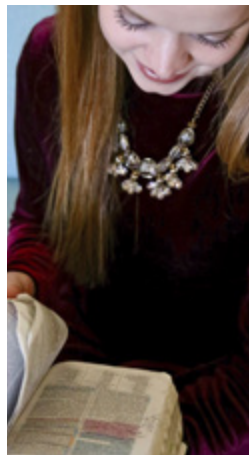


I finished my first half marathon despite pouring rain.



At school, I love dancing with the Hip Hop Club.





BECOMING BETTER PREPARED TO SERVE THE LORD

After graduation I headed off to Brigham Young University. While there, I kept pondering a part of my patriarchal blessing that mentions sharing the gospel. In the past, I'd always thought, "There's no way I can ever serve a full-time mission. It's too risky with CF!" In addition to the health risks, I was afraid my daily treatment routine wouldn't fit with a typical missionary schedule.

Still, the thought wouldn't go away. Could I actually serve a mission?

As I pondered and prayed, I kept thinking about my favorite scripture. In Mosiah 2:20-21, King Benjamin taught how the Lord had "kept and preserved" His people, "lending [them] breath" each day. These scriptures helped me see how the Lord had "kept and preserved" me.

Though I was still a bit scared, I knew it was God's will for me to serve. I received a doctor's clearance, submitted my papers, and was called to serve a mission. I believed the scripture that teaches that God is "supporting [me] from one moment to another" (Mosiah 2:21). As I served my mission in Boston, Massachusetts, that promise was definitely fulfilled.

My mission days were a treasure. One of the greatest blessings was developing a deeper relationship with Heavenly Father and with Jesus Christ. Part of that closeness meant achieving a better understanding of Their will concerning me, including the importance of safeguarding my health.

As a missionary, you're focused on serving others. Yet I knew that to stay on my mission, I had to remain healthy. I decided to never miss a lung treatment. I would exercise every morning. And I would maintain good eating habits.

As a result, I was better able to be His instrument and serve others. It was a valuable lesson to know I can still serve, even with my illness. I've learned that what you can do, despite any limitations you have, is much better to focus on than what you can't do.



My greatest joy as a missionary was when others embraced the gospel.



It was a valuable lesson to know I could still serve, even with my illness.



I love family scripture study—we gain insights from each other.



First snowfall in the mission field.



Just having fun after a CF fundraising walk.



My (busy) daily planner.

LIVING IN GRATITUDE

Satan wants us to mistreat our bodies. The adversary and the world try to twist something good—the need to take care of our bodies—into something harmful: the idea that you must look or feel a certain way. This distortion can cause great discouragement when we don't look that certain way or fit a certain size.

How do we overcome this worldly message and focus instead on better health? How can we stay motivated to prioritize better health, despite all our challenges?

One answer is to live with gratitude.

When we see our body as a gift from our Creator—when we are grateful for all it can do—we feel stronger motivation to care for it and live to our fullest capacity.

There are times with CF where my lungs don't get the full breaths I need—when my arms become swollen from PICC lines and IVs, when I feel fatigued while fighting off illnesses. In these times, I've found that I can either sulk and see my body's limitations or express gratitude by using well what is still functioning and taking the best care of myself. When we live with patience, faith, and gratitude, we find joy.

FULFILLING DREAMS, AND REACHING THE IMPOSSIBLE

Although many say the mission is the best years of their life, I've come to find that my life is a mission. My mission president would always say, "A mission is the training wheels for an unselfish, consecrated life. When the mission ends, the training wheels come off, and you ride."

Because I changed my lifestyle years ago, I've been able to reach a clearer understanding of what the Lord has in store for me and to accomplish much more while paying heed to the Spirit's direction to help me change. I know that "unto whom much is given much is required" (D&C 82:3).



I've experienced the change from being sedentary, weak, and ill to becoming stronger and more capable. I now have many dreams and know how to better work alongside the Lord to accomplish His work. I've also decided to study corporate wellness and fitness coaching as my profession. After experiencing so many positive changes in my own life, I want to help others reach their potential too.

SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE

When it comes to our physical health, I think of how the Lord has sent us here so that we may have joy (see 2 Nephi 2:25). I believe this includes each of us being able to live each day to the fullest, especially within our families and with those closest to us.

I think often about the joy I can experience with my family today and throughout eternity. Some trials come and go, some stay, but our Heavenly Father, our Savior, and His gospel and promises are always constant. **NE**

The author lives in Utah, USA.



My current part-time job is as a fitness coach for university faculty and staff.

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, Oct. 2013 general conference.

