



By Elder
Adrián Ochoa
Of the Seventy

Want to feel better and more confident physically and emotionally? Regular exercise will help.

I recently read an interesting concept about exercising. I read that if you get up early in the morning, put on your exercise clothes, and think, “I will just wear this, go outside for a walk, and if I feel good, I will start jogging,” you will likely get a good workout before you even realize it. Coming up with a simple plan like this can help you develop good exercise habits and care for your body. For many people, getting started and being consistent are the most difficult parts. If you remember that exercise blesses not only your body but also your mind and intellect, it will help you have the desire to become more physically fit. As you exercise, you will become an energized person who feels strong, confident, alert, and secure.

I remember the story of a bird that started to trade his feathers for worms. It was easy to get food that way, and the bird thought he had plenty of feathers. As he continued to trade his feathers, the bird enjoyed not having to get up early to hunt for worms anymore. He could sit in his nest all day and never have to move a muscle.

Eventually, however, the bird got too used to this and realized he could no longer fly because he had lost his vital feathers.

This can happen to anyone who falls into the trap of bad habits, lazy routines, or use of addictive substances. In *For the Strength of Youth* we read that these things “harm your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. They damage relationships with family and friends and diminish your feelings of self-worth. They limit your ability to make choices for yourself.”¹ Being active and eating right help us to avoid these bad habits. If the bird had continued to fly and hunt, he never would have lost his feathers. Similarly, if we “flap our wings” and exercise regularly, we develop the ability to avoid tendencies that harm and degrade us.

Just as some individuals struggle with physical health, others struggle with emotional health. Life can be difficult, and sometimes we may have feelings of anxiety, depression, or lack of self-esteem. But remember that for both physical and emotional health, exercise and hard work help

to maintain a positive perspective. Taking care of your body also blesses your mind and helps you to remember that you are a child of God and can be confident and happy. Our emotional, physical, and spiritual sides are all linked together. *For the Strength of Youth* teaches: “Your emotional health is also important and may affect your spiritual and physical well-being. Disappointment and occasional sadness are part of this mortal life. However, if you have prolonged feelings of sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, or depression, talk with your parents and your bishop and seek help.”²

Why do we find people around us who seem to be more energetic and joyful? One main reason is habits. If we observe our body from a spiritual perspective and understand that it is “a temple, a gift from God,” we will love it and keep it sacred.³

To me, *sacred* means clean, nourished, and strong. One of the ways Heavenly Father helps us keep our bodies sacred is by giving us the Word of Wisdom. *For the Strength of Youth* explains: “When you are obedient to [the Word of Wisdom], you



BE STRONG,
BE HEALTHY,
BE SMART,

remain free from harmful addictions and have control over your life. You gain the blessings of a healthy body, an alert mind, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. You will be prepared to serve the Lord. Never let Satan or others deceive you into thinking that breaking the Word of Wisdom will make you happier, more popular, or more attractive.”⁴ As you follow the Word of Wisdom, remember that you are taking care of both your body and your mind and that it allows you to “find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge” (D&C 89:19).

Instead of being a bird lazily trading feathers, put on your tennis shoes and be active. Exercise consistently. Enroll in your favorite sport or make friends with whom you can run or do other recreational activities. As you do physical things, you train not only your body but also your mind. Exercise strengthens emotional health too. Remember that the most important thing is not how fast or athletic you are—it is how consistent you are. As you exercise regularly, you’ll not only be happier but you’ll also become stronger, healthier, and smarter. **NE**

NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 27.
2. *For the Strength of Youth*, 27.
3. *For the Strength of Youth*, 25.
4. *For the Strength of Youth*, 25.

Don't be like the lazy bird that traded its feathers for worms.

