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By Mackenzie Brown



10 WEEKS **OF** TOTAL FITNESS



THESE YOUNG WOMEN LEARNED THAT

THERE'S MORE TO FITNESS THAN JUST EXERCISE.

The Laurel youth camp leaders (YCLs) gathered around their camp director, some with an excited gleam in their eye, others exchanging concerned glances. While they had come to this meeting to talk about the theme for this year's Young Women camp, none of them had expected the "Fit Challenge."

And while they might have been intimidated when they got the challenge, close to a year later these young women are still grateful for their experience in service, life balance, and spiritual and physical fitness.



**DO AND BE
YOUR
VERY BEST**

“Feeding the spirit while neglecting the body, which is a temple, usually leads to spiritual dissonance and lowered self-esteem. . . .

“No matter what your current status, the very moment you voluntarily choose honest, joyful, daily repentance by striving to simply do and be your very best, the Savior’s Atonement envelops and follows you, as it were, wherever you go.

Elder Jörg Klebingat of the Seventy, “Approaching the Throne of God with Confidence,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2014, 35, 37.



THE CHALLENGE

The Fit Challenge was extended to the 100+ young women in their stake in Washington, USA. The young women, leaders, and even the high councilors pledged that every week for the 10 weeks before camp they would:

- ▶ **READ THEIR SCRIPTURES EVERY DAY.**
- ▶ **EXERCISE FOR 20 MINUTES THREE DAYS A WEEK.**
- ▶ **COMPLETE A SERVICE ACTIVITY ONCE A WEEK.**
- ▶ **GO EIGHT HOURS STRAIGHT WITHOUT USING THEIR ELECTRONIC DEVICES ONCE A WEEK.**

At the end of every week, they emailed the camp director some thoughts about their experiences that week and reported on the goals they completed.

The theme for the camp was “Fit for the Kingdom,” a line taken from the hymn “More Holiness Give Me” (*Hymns*, no. 131). The activities before and during camp taught the young women that we should all be spiritually

and physically healthy in order to return to Heavenly Father. In addition to the Fit Challenge, everyone was going to run a 5K at camp, instead of the traditional hike, with the YCLs helping to give out water and direct people along the trail.

“I was a little freaked out [after the announcement] because I am not an athletic person whatsoever,” Kendra C., one of the YCLs at camp, said. “I’m terrible at sports. I’m just not coordinated enough to do it.”

After the initial “freak-out,” Kendra decided to at least try the Fit Challenge so she could keep up with the other young women when they ran the 5K. Though she didn’t suddenly come to love physical activity, she was surprised to realize that exercise was actually fun for her.

“I had to find something I enjoyed,” Kendra said. “Exercise shouldn’t be something that you don’t look forward to, that you’re afraid of. Finding something you like, whether it be dancing, walking or running, or playing a sport, is key. For me, yoga and Pilates make me feel really good.”



GETTING OVER NERVES

Hailey B., 15, was also nervous about the 5K. She had always come in last in mile-long races at school, and she didn't have much hope that this time would be any different. But when she was able to improve her time and finish in the middle of the pack, she felt on top of the world.

"I finished the 5K in the middle of the group, which I was happy about," Hailey said. "Now I figure I can finish other hard things in my life too—like school."

Elena R., 13, also felt nervous about camp but for a different reason. She was excited to accept the Fit Challenge and to share what she was doing with her friends at school, but she was worried they might make fun of her. She invited one of her friends who is not a Church member to participate in the Fit Challenge with her, and to her surprise, the friend accepted. The two finished the challenge and went to camp together.

"I just felt like this would be a really great opportunity for her to learn about the gospel," Elena said. "I was really excited that she was reading the Book of Mormon every day. I thought Young Women camp would be a great time to learn about the Church because we'd be around girls our age who are part of the Church."



CONTINUING THE CHALLENGE

Though the Fit Challenge ended after Young Women camp, the young women in the stake have kept the habits they learned during the challenge.

"On a Friday afternoon an opportunity came up to go visit a new girl in our ward," Emma H., 15, said. "No one wanted to do it, including me. But I think the idea of helping someone else and sacrificing my time was something I was more used to after the Fit Challenge and more used to saying yes to. I said I'd go, and I went and had a super great visit with one of the Beehives. We got her to come watch the general women's session of conference with us. It was cool because she seemed to have wanted us to come by."

"When you are asked to do something, whether it's by a leader in your ward or your stake or a prompting from Heavenly Father, you should act on that," she continued. "Try something new, work a little harder to be a little better. Those practices can really change your life if you let them."

The young women found that the 10-week Fit Challenge and Young Women camp helped them make and keep good habits.

"Every day I've been reading my scriptures and not focusing on worldly things for a few minutes," Josette P., 16, said. "Just spending a little bit of time on it before I go to bed has made me feel closer to the Lord."

Kendra agreed. "The Fit Challenge has really helped me," she said. "I've started Running Start [a concurrent college-in-high-school program], so I have to balance a lot of activities. I think the challenge prepared me for it—like keeping up with homework but also finding time to serve, take a break from technology, and get my seminary reading done.

"When you're spiritually and physically fit, you can be more prepared to go out and serve others, like your neighbors around you. I think it's very important to be both." **NE**

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Planning for Camp

For ideas in planning your own Young Women camp experience, visit lds.org/go/campNE416.

