Dear Alice,

I have a busy schedule (don't we all?) but I've been experimenting with different ways to stay active. I like the idea of using an exercise DVD but there are so many of them out there that I'm having a hard time deciding which one would be right for me. In addition, a lot of workout DVDs make crazy claims about weight loss or muscle gains that I don't think are credible (or even desirable!). I'm not trying to lose a ton of weight or have a great body; I just want to be more active and challenge myself to get in better shape. I don't want an exercise DVD that's going to push me way past my limits or overtrain me in the hopes of getting these results.

What should I look for when I'm picking an exercise DVD? Are there particular instructors, brands, companies, etc. that are more or less reputable? How do I find something that's not too challenging, but still pushes me? Also, do you have any suggestions on how to start an at-home fitness regimen?

Answer

Dear Reader,

When it comes to workout DVDs, not all are created equal. What works for a friend may not work for you, and vice versa, which is why you should try to do as much research as you can before you press play. Also, keep in mind that it may take a few attempts or selections to figure out which one is the best fit for you.

Choosing a workout DVD can be tough because once you tear off that cellophane packaging, there's usually little chance of being able to return it. So how do you make an informed decision? Here are a few tips that might help you in your quest:

- **Don't believe the gimmicks.** A workout DVD that advertises itself as a quick fix for muscle toning and weight loss is often misleading. Everyone's body is different, so not everyone will achieve the same results. As you mentioned, you are trying to be more active and challenge yourself so visible physical changes aren't necessarily indicative of achieving your end goal.

- **Credentials matter.** Since there aren't standard guidelines that dictate who can be featured on a workout DVD, consider who might be most qualified to give advice about fitness. A fit looking celebrity might not have much expertise in health and fitness. It's a good idea to look for workout DVDs that feature an instructor who is accredited by a...
national agency like the American Council on Exercise (ACE) [2].

- **Preview DVDs.** Borrow DVDs from a friend, the library, or rent one to test it out for yourself. You might also find that full workout videos are posted online for free or for an affordable price. Reading user reviews online might also be helpful, but keep in mind that everyone has a different opinion on what works.

- **Take it slow.** Since you’re new to the workout DVD world, look for those that offer beginner workouts. It may prove helpful to watch the entire video before jumping into your workout. That way, you can get used to the format and intensity before you get started. Get prepared! Do you have the space for the workout? Do you need to purchase any equipment?

- **Listen to your body.** Is the instructor going too fast for you? Do you need a water break? You can do the exercises at your own pace by taking advantage of that pause button!

Don’t forget, the best workouts are ones that keep you fit and are also enjoyable. There’s more than one way to get in shape and many different exercises work the same muscles. Say you detest lifting weights, you might find that a yoga DVD provides the same benefits as a weight lifting DVD. So don’t be afraid to try new techniques!

Before you begin any type of new exercise routine it’s always a good idea to consult a medical professional. Good luck finding the right DVD for you!

Alice!

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