



## Building Grit:

# The Power of Morning Exercise and Mental Resilience

### LOOKING AHEAD...

#### MoveSpring April Challenge: Flex Time

This month we are challenged to stretch for 260 minutes.

#### Open Enrollment

Open Enrollment for the RCAB Health and Dental Plans and the RCAB Paid Catholic Family and Medical Leave Program starts May 12.

#### Child Abuse Prevention Month

Learn what you can do to keep our children safe and free from abuse.

#### Wellness Webinars

This month we learn to establish good spending and savings habits, plan for retirement, and better manage stress, worry, and social anxiety.

#### The Recipe Corner

A delicious and bright spring salad.

As we embrace the renewed energy of Spring, it's the perfect time to cultivate healthy habits. If you're having difficulty sticking to an exercise routine, consider adopting a morning routine. This month we discuss how to train your mind to adapt to challenging situations and build a morning exercise routine that sets the tone for a productive day.

### The Psychology of Grit

Grit, a combination of perseverance and passion for long-term goals, has been extensively studied by psychologist Angela Duckworth. Her [research](#) revealed that grit is a stronger predictor of success than IQ. In her book, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, she explains that individuals with high levels of grit are 62% more likely to achieve their long-term goals. Grit enables people to push through challenges and stay committed to their objectives.

### Training Discipline Throughout the Day

Research from the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* has shown that willpower is strongest in the morning and declines steadily throughout the day. Starting your day with a challenging task, such as exercise, can train your brain to handle discomfort, making everything else easier in comparison. This practice builds grit and prepares you to tackle the day's challenges with greater ease.

### The Benefits of Morning Exercise

A Harvard study found that individuals who embraced controlled stress, such as early morning exercise, experienced 40% lower cortisol levels and significantly higher cognitive function. Pushing through something difficult early in the morning forces your mind to adapt, and the more your mind adapts to challenging situations, the easier the hard tasks become.

### Practical Tips for Building a Morning Exercise Routine

1. **Start Small:** Begin with a manageable routine, such as a 10-minute walk. Gradually increase the intensity and duration as you build stamina and confidence.
2. **Consistency is Key:** Aim to exercise at the same time every morning to establish a habit. Consistency helps reinforce the routine and makes it easier to stick with it.
3. **Set Clear Goals:** Define what you want to achieve with your morning exercise routine. Whether it's improving your fitness, reducing stress, or boosting your mood, having clear goals will keep you motivated.
4. **Prepare the Night Before:** Lay out your workout clothes and equipment the night before to make it easier to get started in the morning. This reduces decision fatigue and helps you get moving quickly.
5. **Track Your Progress:** Keep a journal or use a fitness app to track your progress. Seeing your improvements over time can be incredibly motivating and reinforce your commitment.

Building grit and mental resilience through morning exercise is a powerful way to start your day. Stay committed to your goals and you'll see the benefits over time. Embrace the hard things.



## HEALTHY SOIL, HEALTHY YOU: CELEBRATING EARTH MONTH

April is Earth Month – a perfect time to pause and reflect on the connection between our health and the planet’s health. When we think about eating healthy, we usually focus on things like carbs, fats, proteins, vitamins, and minerals. But what if good nutrition goes much deeper, and starts before food even gets to our plates– in the soil our food is grown in? Healthy soil is an intricate living ecosystem teeming with bacteria, fungi, earthworms, and other organisms that play essential roles in nutrient cycling.



### How You Can Support a Healthier Food System

1. **Support Farms that Prioritize Soil Health.** Buy organic, pasture-raised, and locally grown products when possible. Visit farmers markets or join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).
2. **Check out the Clean Fifteen and Dirty Dozen.** Visit the [Environmental Working Group](#)’s website to help you prioritize which foods to buy organic versus which ones may not be worth the cost.
3. **Grow Your own Food.** Even a small home garden can produce nutrient-rich vegetables while improving your connection to the food you eat. It’s an affordable way to eat organic foods instead of buying them at the store. Gardening also benefits your physical and mental health through exercise and stress reduction.
4. **Compost at Home.** Composting food scraps and yard waste returns valuable nutrients to the soil.
5. **Reduce Food Waste.** Reducing food waste conserves resources, such as water and energy, and helps reduce landfill and methane emissions. Plan meals wisely, store food properly, and find creative ways to use leftovers.

## April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

The Archdiocese of Boston is committed to keeping our children safe and free from abuse. Protecting God’s Children sessions are provided multiple times most weeks throughout the Archdiocese of Boston and are available to everyone.

To learn what you can do to help protect our children or to schedule a session, click [here](#) or contact the Office of Pastoral Support and Child Protection at [Advocacy@rcab.org](mailto:Advocacy@rcab.org) or 617-746-5994.



Open Enrollment for the RCAB Health and Dental Plans and the RCAB Paid Catholic Family and Medical Leave Program starts on May 12! Stay tuned for more information in the May newsletter.



## Wellness Webinars

### Managing Stress and Worry

Use access code **RCAB** to view the webinar.

[Tuesday, April 8: 1-1:30 p.m.](#)

[Tuesday, April 15: 5-5:30 p.m.](#)

The Learn to Live clinical team will walk through concepts and exercises to help you manage emotional challenges. You'll learn how to recognize signs of stress and take action to reduce negative emotions—restoring a feeling of calmness and improved well-being.

### Why Do I Care So Much About What They Think?

Use access code **RCAB** to view the webinar.

[Wednesday, April 23: 1-1:30 p.m.](#)

Have you experienced increased heart rate, sweaty palms, self-conscious thoughts, or loneliness? Do you worry too often about how others judge you? You aren't alone. Break through your social anxiety and fear judgment by learning evidence-based strategies to help you live more fully!

### James Parker-Ashley Fitness Class

AVAILABLE ANYTIME

[Click Here to Access Video](#)

This class is designed to improve your flexibility and build strength, control, and endurance. All levels are welcome.

Grab your fitness mat and join us!

### Voya Financial Webinars

#### Retirement Planning for Women

[Tuesday, April 1: 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.](#)

Discover the challenges women face in planning for retirement and learn tips to overcome them, including saving strategies and health care options.

#### Establishing Good Spending and Saving Habits

[Tuesday, April 8: 10 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.](#)

[Tuesday, April 22: 12 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.](#)

Take control of your day-to-day finances by getting organized and learn new ideas to help you reach your goals.

## In Case You Missed It...



**PLAY NOW!**

View the recorded webinars from last month!

[Unmasking the Secrets to a Better Night's Sleep](#)

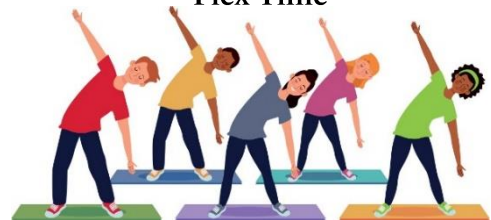
[Reset and Refresh: Personalizing Your Sleep Schedule](#)

[Mindful Eating: Vitamin M](#)

## MoveSpring

### April Challenge

#### Flex Time



Stretching is vital for health, reducing stress, increasing flexibility, lowering injury risk, and improving muscle blood flow. **This month, you are challenged to stretch for at least 260 minutes.** Track your time spent stretching. Once you reach 260 minutes, log in to the MoveSpring app or website to record the Challenge as completed.

Employees and spouses enrolled in the RCAB Health Plan may click [here](#) or scan the QR code to join by April 7.



**Earn \$50 into your HealthEquity HRA/HSA when you complete this Challenge!**

## THE RECIPE CORNER

### Bright Spring Salad

Recipe from [Love and Lemons](#)

Prep Time: 20 mins | Cook Time: 5 mins | Total Time: 25 mins

This spring salad recipe is a perfect light meal or side dish. Filled with fresh veggies, herbs, and a zippy vinaigrette, it's simple, bright, and delicious.

#### Ingredients

- 1 bunch asparagus, tender parts, chopped into 1-inch pieces
- ½ cup frozen peas, thawed
- A few handfuls salad greens
- 2 radishes, thinly sliced
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese
- ½ avocado, pitted and diced
- ¼ cup chopped toasted pistachios
- ½ cup roasted chickpeas
- Fresh herbs, for garnish (basil, mint and/or chives)
- Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

#### Dressing

- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves, or a mix of basil and mint leaves
- 1 small garlic clove
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more as desired
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt



#### Preparation

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and set a bowl of ice water nearby. Blanch the asparagus for about 1 minute or until tender, but still bright green. Transfer to the ice water for 1 minute, then drain. Allow the asparagus to dry and transfer it back to the bowl and add the peas.
2. Make the dressing: In a food processor or blender, pulse together the basil, garlic, lemon juice and zest, vinegar, olive oil, and salt. Season to taste, adding more oil as desired.
3. Add half of the dressing to the bowl with the asparagus and toss to coat. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. Assemble the salad. Arrange the salad greens on a platter, then layer the asparagus/pea mixture, the radishes, feta, avocado, pistachios, chickpeas, and herbs on top. Drizzle with the remaining dressing, season to taste with more salt and pepper, and serve.

*In health,*

*Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Benefits Department*