

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOURSELF AND TO OTHERS

According to a Center for Disease Control's Nutrition and Physical Activity report for 2002, 25% of the U.S. population reported not doing a physical activity in the previous month. A physical activity included such things as running, calisthenics, golf, gardening, walking, etc. Although this percentage is down from 31% in 1989, it is still a scary statistic and one of the main reasons for concern regarding obesity in this country.¹

In a 2004 survey conducted by the Outdoor Industry Foundation (OIF), 9% of Americans surveyed indicated they did not participate in some kind of outdoor activity within the last two years. Again, this is a scary statistic.²

However, it also represents opportunity. By understanding why people enjoy outdoor activity, what activities they do and what are the factors keeping those who don't do outdoor activities, we can help increase participation. We can more effectively get others involved. **The OIF survey found that parents, family and friends were the biggest influence in getting people started in an outdoor activity.** In addition, on a broader scale, we can better structure programs, organize events, develop policies and make products to facilitate participation by improving accessibility, reducing associated costs and increasing outdoor enjoyment.

Reasons why people participate

There are many reasons why people enjoy outdoor activities, whether gardening, going to a park, walking, kayaking or high altitude climbing. The OIF survey found that people had the following attitudes toward outdoor activity:

Many of the participants focus on the health benefits of outdoor activity. They are proactive about their health and directly incorporate outdoor activities are part of their healthy lifestyle:

- 79% of participants state they are proactively taking charge of their health
- 63% of participants like activities that are physically challenging
- 50% of participants in outdoor activities as the main way they get their exercise³

Interestingly, there are many other reasons why people enjoy outdoor activities that are not directly health related, but which may indirectly benefit one’s health:

Attitudes Toward Outdoor Activities ⁴

<u>Outdoor Connection Statement</u>	% Agreeing with <u>Statement</u>
I enjoy the feeling of accomplishment after participating in a outdoor activity	88
Getting into a natural setting allows me to escape the everyday pressures of life	88
Participating in outdoor activities strengthens our family’s relationship with one another	79
Participating in outdoor activities keeps me feeling young	79
Participating in outdoor activities allows me to connect with myself	76
Participating in outdoor activities is the main way I get exercise	50
I consider myself a very social person	67
I would like my children to experience more outdoor recreational activities, such as hiking, camping, fishing or canoeing	55

Reducing stress by escaping everyday life pressures, nourishment through strengthening family relationships, and feeling good through a sense of accomplishment or connecting with oneself are indirect ways that outdoor activity can improve health. They are important to living a balanced life.

Which Outdoor Activities

91% of the population has participated in at least one outdoor activity within the last two years. Which activities do they like? How often do they participate?

Although the amount of time spent outside is directly correlated to health, participation in human powered events may offer the most healthful contribution. 57% of the U.S. population has participated in at least one human powered activity.⁵

Below is a chart indicating the outdoor recreational activities that people participate in and the participation percentage. Interestingly many of the most popular activities do not require a significant investment, which is one of the reasons why people don’t participate.

**Past Two Year Participation
In Outdoor Activities by Activity ⁶**

<u>Outdoor Activity</u>	<u>Participation %</u>
Swimming	47
Walking vigorously for exercise	43
Gardening	43
Jogging/working out	38
Bicycling (paved or off road)	30
Hiking/Backpacking	28
Camping in a tent	25
Conventional fishing	24
Boating	21
Golf	16
Paddle Sports (canoeing, rafting, kayaking)	15
Off road recreation	9
Hunting	9
Downhill skiing/Snowboarding	7
Trail running	6
Climbing	5
Bird watching	5
Fly fishing	4
Water skiing	4
Snowmobiling	3
Surfing/Wind surfing	2
Cross-Country/Nordic skiing/Telemark	2
Adventure racing	1

The interesting thing is the wide variety of outdoor activities that people participate in. This variety offers opportunity to help find an appropriate activity for ourselves and others.

We can all make a difference

Parents and family are the most influential factor in getting someone to begin doing an outdoor activity. 41% of participants said that it was a family member that got them

started.⁷ Outdoor activity is great for family. Again, 79% say that outdoor activities strengthen family relationships.

Starting young is important to active outdoor participation. 90% of participants started an outdoor activity between the ages of five and 18 years old.⁸ Participation in outdoor activities is an ingrained behavior. Most participants started young, being heavily influenced by already participating parents or friends. Also, 55% of those surveyed said that they would like to have their children experience more outdoor recreational activities, such as hiking, camping, fishing or canoeing.

The second most influential factor for participation is friends with 31% saying friends got them started.⁹ Doing outdoor activities can be social and 67% of outdoor participants consider themselves very social people.

There are many reasons why people don't do outdoor activities. The OIF survey identified some of those reasons given by those that didn't do an outdoor activity within the last two years. These reasons are of course valid, but are simply challenges to overcome.

Top Challenges Getting People To Participate in Outdoor Activities ¹⁰

<u>Challenges</u>	% of non-participants siting
Adults don't have enough time or are too busy	60
Costs associated with gear and equipment	39
Disinterest among adults/parents	33
Lack of knowledge about how to get started/what to do/where to go	30
Lack of nearby parks or areas to recreate	24
Concerns about safety while participating in the activity	18
Costs associated with access/entry/club fees	6
Traffic/parking concerns	5

Understanding the above challenges helps us to look at how we can help people to overcome them. For example, for those too busy, start small by going for a walk or a quick bike ride. Save time by staying local, minimizing driving time to where the activity is.

Costs for gear and equipment are the second most significant reason given for not participating in an outdoor activity. Again, start small. Walking vigorously and hiking basically requires good shoes and appropriate apparel. Biking on paved road doesn't

require an expensive mountain bike or a Tour de France road bike. Good quality, used bikes can be found inexpensively.

Lack of knowledge about how to get started, what to do or where to go was cited by 30% of non-participants. Your knowledge, enthusiasm and active help can get them started. There are also a number of resources that can help, including the internet.

Lack of nearby parks or areas to recreate is another important factor, cited by 24% of non-participants. We can also help to overcome this challenge, but how we do it is different than by influencing family and friends. It is done involvement and influence on a community, state and national level. For example, the ACEs program helps to develop local settings where people of all ages and abilities can easily enjoy walking, hiking, bicycling and other forms of recreation. For more information, call (770) 488-5692 or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/cnpa/aces.htm>

You can make a difference. Start small with family and friends. Below are the identified actions most effective in encouraging people to do outdoor activities:

There are many effective ways to encourage people to get outdoors, whether they're adults or children. Some are:

- Turn off the TV
- Start small/stay local
- Join organized programs (school, work, clubs)
- Organize activities among family and friends
- Find affordable activities, gear and equipment
- Work to improve accessibility

Conclusion

The benefits for outdoor activity participation directly and indirectly benefit our health and well-being. Each of us, along with some family members and friends, can get those benefits by increasing outdoor activity. There are many reasons why people don't do outdoor activities. However, we can help overcome these challenges. We can make a difference. ***Join the Journey with All Terrain.....***

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- (1) http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/stats/us_physical_activity/leisure_time.htm
 - (2) Outdoor Industry Foundation, *Exploring the Active Lifestyle – Executive Summary*, January 2004, p. 32)
 - (3) Ibid, p. 22
 - (4) Ibid., p. 25
 - (5) Ibid, p. 7
 - (6) Ibid, p. 32-33
 - (7) Ibid, p. 65
 - (8) Ibid, p. 64
 - (9) Ibid, p. 65
 - (10) Ibid, p. 58