

Welcome to the real world. The one where nothing revolves around health and well-being, but instead around your "productivity." The one where you slowly trade your present and future health for a paycheck.

The next four weeks can change your life, if you really want it.

Your Job Will Be the Death of You

There's a scene in the movie *Fight Club* that comes to mind here. Tyler Durden pulls a late-night convenience store clerk out behind the store, points a revolver at his head, and informs him that he is going to die.

Then, Tyler asks him what he really wanted to be when he grew up. A veterinarian. Tyler lowers the pistol and gives Raymond thirty days to be on his way to achieving his dream (being a veterinarian) or he's coming back to kill him.

VIDEO: [Fight Club – Raymond K. Hessel](#)

That was Raymond's wake-up call. **This can be yours, if you choose to hear it.**

You might be productive and healthy now, but as the days, weeks, months, and years go by, you'll find that **your body will become so decrepid that even simple tasks become a humbling challenge. Then, you will die, most likely sooner than you needed to.**

Three to Five Hours a Week Is not Enough

Study after study is revealing that health isn't maintained by an hour at the gym three to five days a week. Consider that hour your "pleasure workout" – do it because it's fun, do it because it makes you look good and feel good, do it because it lets you eat dessert, but don't fool yourself into thinking that it undoes eight hours of sitting each day.

According to [this study](#), long periods of unbroken sitting puts you at greater risk of **diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and death**, with the strongest correlation to diabetes. Fortunately, [this study](#) determined that taking short walking breaks each hour counteracts many of these negative effects.

Working a sedentary job has been equated to **smoking a pack of cigarettes a day** in terms of health outcomes. Sobering?

The desk workouts are not only a collection of activities to perform throughout the day, but a **framework to plug them into**. This enables you to **maintain or even boost your work productivity while staving off damage to your health** associated with sedentary work and long periods of sitting.

The Pomodoro Technique

To correspond to the five minutes per hour recommendation of the second study, **we will use the Pomodoro technique to schedule our activity sessions**. The Pomodoro technique is a **timeboxing technique** that creates artificial deadlines (increasing motivation and efficiency) and breaks up monotonous work.

You are invited to watch the short video at the Pomodoro technique link, but keep in mind that our first concern here is freeing up the necessary time, not becoming Pomodoro experts.

The Plan

You will need a timer. Whether it's your phone, an online app, or a simple kitchen timer, it doesn't matter, as long as it doesn't disturb you until it's supposed to.

We're going to ease into this thing, so to start, you'll set your timer to count down from 55 minutes. When the timer goes off, re-set it for five minutes and **perform an activity for the entire five minutes**. When you're done, set it for 55 minutes again and the cycle begins anew.

Alternately, you can set an alarm for each hour, then time your five minute sessions. Whatever works for you is fine, as long as you achieve five minutes of activity per hour.

What is the Point of Five Minutes of Effort?

Here are some benefits you can expect if you follow this plan consistently:

- Consistent production of BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor – you want this)
- Improved bloodflow
- Postural benefits (and therefore reduced pain and injuries)
- Improved alertness and productivity
- Increased lifespan
- Increased sense of wellbeing

Weeks One and Two Practice and Activities

1. Sitting up straight

Your poor posture is making you weak, injury-prone, and is definitely not sexy.

[Video: Posture Hack: How to Have Better Desk Posture](#)

2. Walking

This one should be easy, but is also the most important. For your five minute "breaks," simply walk. Stand up straight, extend your hips, look around you, and walk.

Walk for the whole five minutes. Not only will this help to pump blood throughout your body using the rhythmic contractions of the muscles, but it will also wake up your brain.

3. Upper Body and Forearm Mobility

While you're walking, you have a great opportunity to help yourself in other ways.

[Video: Declawing Your Paw: Tight Extensors](#)

The second video shows the stretch being done with the palm against a flat surface, but we will be doubling up on our time by doing it while walking.

Three thoughts on this:

1. Performing this stretch in the air with an outstretched arm is better than not performing it all.
2. You could do it when you aren't walking, too. Combining them just seems like efficient use of time to me.
3. Since you will be walking for five minutes, you'll know that you had plenty of time to benefit from the stretch.

In addition to the above activities, you can **add in a simple chest and shoulder opening stretch while you walk**. Clasp your hands together behind you, palm-to-palm with fingers interlaced. Work to open up the chest and shoulders, standing up nice and straight while pressing your palms together evenly. Breathe into this position.

4. Drinking Water

This one is easy, too. **Aim to drink half your body weight in ounces each day**. For example, a 160lb person would try for 80oz of water.

See, this whole thing won't be that hard! [Getting enough water](#) is a basic foundation of health, just as [getting enough sleep](#) is.

5. Sleep Well, and Enough

If you are getting less than six hours, that is simply unacceptable and you might as well forget all other attempts at fitness until you've fixed that.

If you regularly get less than eight hours, your health and ability to recover from training is still compromised.

For more information, check out [4 Deadly Things Caused By Lack of Sleep & 2 Reasons to Get More](#) and our extensive [library of sleep-related articles](#).

The Plan for the First Two Weeks, Bulleted Version:

- **Save yourself** – no one is going to do it for you.
- **Sit Up Straight** – or you'll get stuck that way.
- **Walk and mobilize** for 5 minutes of each hour that you sit.
- **Drink enough water.**
- **Get enough sleep.**

During week two, add in the following flow before lunch:

[Shoulder Openings and Core Integration](#)

By the end of two weeks, you'll already be healthier and begin feeling better, not to mention you'll likely be more productive. Win-win.

Weeks Three and Four

As I wrote earlier, we are easing you into this. New habits, lasting behavioral changes, take time to manifest.

If you watched the Pomodoro video, you noticed that the true Pomodoro technique uses **cycles of 25 minutes of work and three to five minute breaks**, not five minutes per hour. For the next two weeks, you are going to practice your new skills with this denser time table.

WAIT!!! Winslow, are you crazy? I already can't explain why I take five minutes per hour "off." How am I going to explain this behavior to my boss and coworkers? My suggestion? **Enroll them in an outcome.**

You: "Excuse me, boss, but I'd like to try something novel that could create big benefits to the office."

Boss: "What would that be?" (Skeptical, of course.)

You: "Well, I have a well thought out plan to make myself, and eventually, the entire office, more productive, and you look like a star. How does that sound?"

I think you get the picture from here. You'll be committed to giving this an honest effort, to preserve your boss's and coworkers' trust in you, and everyone benefits in one or more ways.

[The Pomodoro Technique®](#)

From the [Wikipedia entry](#):

There are five basic steps to implementing the technique:

1. Decide on the task to be done
2. Set the pomodoro timer to n minutes (traditionally 25)
3. Work on the task until the timer rings
4. Take a short break (3–5 minutes)
5. After four pomodori, take a longer break (15–30 minutes)

The key to making the Pomodoro technique work is the fact that we perform more efficiently under a deadline. By creating "artificial" deadlines (they're *a//* artificial, btw) twice an hour and monitoring our productivity, we get more done in less time, and are less stressed because of it.

Summing up, for weeks three and four, you will simply implement the Pomodoro technique as it was designed, filling in your "breaks" with the activities we established in the first two weeks.

If you want or need support, or want to chronicle your experience, start a thread in the [Breaking Muscle forums](#) and I'll be there to help.