



A Word to the Wise, EXERCISE!

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Background Leading to My Inquiry

Exercise is a word we hear all the time, but does it really have the impact one thinks it will? The interest that led me to my inquiry was my health and whether or not a regular exercise program would be beneficial to me from the perspective of helping me be more productive as a school leader. With feeling low energy in the afternoons on a regular basis and having high blood pressure, I wanted to see if exercising on a regular basis would help me feel better. Through the project I tracked energy, mood, focus, and productivity wanting to know how or if a regular exercise program would impact these areas.

The Purpose of My Inquiry

One's health is a subject that most people think about, but to what degree of seriousness varies from person to person. As I have aged and taken on more responsibility related to my position as Principal my health has been on my mind more and more. I have always been an active person, but over the years my activity has slowed due to age, family responsibilities, and job responsibilities. At my doctor appointments I have seen my weight go up as well as other health factors such as blood pressure and cholesterol. My doctor points out that my job as an educator is a stressful occupation and starting a regular exercise program would be beneficial to me and likely help reverse some of the negative health trends that have been part of my life for the past few years. My family has pointed out how I am usually tired, moody at times, and don't seem as energetic as I once was a few years ago. Personally, I feel tired a lot and notice that my mood can vary even though I try to put a smile on my face and act as though all is great with the world. For several years now I have thought about how a regular exercise program could impact my life in a positive way not only at home but as an educator.

My wife decided several years ago to implement a regular exercise routine into her life via Beachbody. I have witnessed how such a routine has brought about better health for her related to better information from doctor appointments, she seems to have more energy, and seems happier with her job as a CPA which is stressful as well. I also talked with a staff member at work who started to exercise on a regular basis. The staff member walks between periods as well as after school. The staff member also lifts weights after school on a regular basis during the week. Seeing this from the staff member I asked them if they felt the exercise regimen they were doing has been beneficial to them. The staff member talked about how they have more energy and feel they are in a better mood since starting to exercise on a regular basis. The biggest factor they talked about was time and how they had to alter their schedule to make time to get exercise in. All of these factors have weighed on my mind from the perspective of if I started to exercise on a regular basis, what impact would it have on me? Would I become more productive at work? Would I be in a better mood at work and home? Would I have more energy related to work? Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to analyze if a regular exercise program would help me be more productive as a Principal.

My Wondering

With this purpose, I wondered if a regular exercise program would have a positive impact on my work performance as a Principal related to my focus, mood, productivity, and energy.

My Actions

To gain insights into my wondering, I thought about options that would afford me an accurate way to track if regular exercise would have a positive impact on my work productivity related to focus, mood, and job performance. I am not a morning person so I decided exercising in the evening or night time was going to work best for me. I also wanted to try a variety of exercise options such as cardio, running/walking, and/or light lifting. I wanted to mix the routine up so I would not get bored doing one specific exercise and felt this would help me stay committed. I knew my time schedule was tight so exercising a minimum of three times a week worked out best for me. I decided to exercise twice during the work week and one day over the weekend for 20-30 minutes each time.

While the above was the way I started out it did not remain this way. After trying to work exercise into the evenings I found myself struggling to do so due to being tired after work. It became something I had to do rather than something I was motivated to do. I decided to change my routine to the mornings and instead of doing two days during the week and one on the weekend, I tried to work three to four days in during the week no matter what day it fell on. I felt changing my routines to the morning would better work as I was more likely to do the routine as I was not as tired in the morning as I was in the evenings.

Data Collection

To gain the best insights into my wondering, I decided to track mood, focus, productivity, and energy. I decided to track data using a Google Sheet utilizing a scale of 1-5. The rating scale used is as follows: 1- very poor, 2-poor, 3-average, 4-above average, 5-Excellent. By using such a number system I was able to look for patterns related to exercise trends and patterns related to focus, mood, productivity, and energy. I recorded my findings on the Google Sheet at the end of the exercise session. I also tracked on the Google sheet the amount of time exercised which targets a minimum time of 20 minutes, but a maximum time of 30 minutes. I also tracked the day of the week I exercised as well as the type of exercise performed such as cardio, treadmill, walking, yoga, or other. I also had a notes section which I noted anything that I felt had an impact on me during the day such as sore muscles or dealing with a lot of discipline on a particular day. I wanted to track this as I felt there could be factors outside of exercising that can impact mood, focus, productivity, and energy.

My Data

Quantitative data: Google Sheet, graphs

Qualitative data: Notes, comments from staff and family, internet articles

My Discoveries

Learning Statement One: Exercise was beneficial related to impacting my energy level.

From this AR project it is apparent that exercising on a regular basis had a positive impact on my energy level. The average of my energy level was 7.28 which was well above average showing that exercising is correlated to one having more energy. With more energy, one can have a positive impact on what they do on a daily basis as well as those they are around.

Learning Statement Two: Other factors outside of exercise have an impact on one's focus, mood, productivity, and energy level.

The unusual circumstances of having increased discipline issues and more job responsibilities thrust upon me due to the Dean of Students/Athletic Director out due to back surgery during this time had an impact on the factors of focus, mood, productivity, and energy level. On days where there were discipline issues, the factors looked at were scored lower than days where there were not discipline issues. Exercising correlates to having a positive impact on one, but there are "other" factors that can impact the mood one is in, the focus one has, the productivity that gets done, and the energy one feels. Discipline is an aspect that can "suck the life" out of one if it is a heavy discipline day. Taking on more job responsibilities was an added stressor that had an impact on mood, productivity, focus, and energy as well.

Learning Statement Three: The exercise routine does not matter, what matters is exercising.

One aspect of this project that stood out to me was that just exercising had a positive correlation to how I felt. I tried various forms of exercise ranging from walking, to Beachbody workouts, to treadmill; but no matter what type of exercise I did just exercising had a positive impact on me. I liked certain types of exercising over others, but just exercising was a key in impacting me in a positive way.

Where I Am Heading Next

This project has made me realize that exercising should be a part of one's lifestyle as it has a positive correlation to one's health. While exercise is an ingredient in the pie related to one's overall health there are other factors that can impact such things as mood, focus, productivity, and energy outside of exercise. Job stress which is common to administration has a negative impact on the areas looked at and while exercise helps counterbalance the stress associated with administration one has to be willing to make exercise a regular routine.

Knowing that a regular exercise program will likely have a positive impact on one, why don't people such as myself participate in such a regimen? Wondering this, I did a search to see why people don't exercise on a regular basis knowing exercise is good for them. I found the following top ten reasons from a New York Post article:

1. I don't have time
2. I don't have the motivation
3. I don't like exercising

4. Work gets in the way
5. I feel too old
6. I don't see results
7. Don't have the equipment at home
8. It's too expensive
9. It's inconvenient
10. Gym is too far away

The same article listed the following concerning how Americans would feel if they would exercise more regularly:

1. More energetic
2. More motivated
3. Happier
4. More focused
5. Less stressed
6. Less likely to fall ill
7. Less tired
8. More successful
9. More outgoing

I can identify with a lot of the reasons given in the article for not exercising, especially reason 1 related to not having time. The fact that I DID exercise on a regular basis for this project and never had before proves the point that one will FIND TIME to do the things they WANT to do. Reflecting back on this project has helped me realize that I need to stop making excuses to not exercise and make the time to do so because a regular exercise program definitely has a positive impact on one's life as well as the lives of those around us because of the reasons listed above from the New York Post Article. As this AR project is titled, A Word To The Wise, Exercise!

Bibliography

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A Word To The Wise, Exercise

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Background Leading to this Inquiry

- Feeling of low energy-afternoon lull.
- Results from doctor visits over the years.
- Hearing benefits of exercise. Common knowledge exercise is beneficial.



Purpose of This Inquiry

- Therefore, the purpose of my action inquiry was to monitor how a regular exercise program would impact me.
- Saw benefits of regular exercise program for wife and staff members.



My Wondering

- With this purpose, I wondered if a regular exercise program would have a positive impact on my work performance as a Principal related to my focus, mood, productivity, and energy.



My Actions

- To gain insights into my wondering, I thought about options that would afford me an accurate way to track if regular exercise would have a positive impact on my work productivity related to focus, mood, and job performance. I am not a morning person so I decided exercising in the evening or night time was going to work best for me. I also wanted to try a variety of exercise options such as cardio, running/walking, and/or light lifting. I wanted to mix the routine up so I would not get bored doing one specific exercise and felt this would help me stay committed. I knew my time schedule was tight so exercising a minimum of three times a week worked out best for me. I decided to exercise twice during the work week and one day over the weekend for 20-30 minutes each time.
- While the above was the way I started out it did not remain this way. After trying to work exercise into the evenings I found myself struggling to do so due to being tired after work. It became something I had to do rather than something I was motivated to do. I decided to change my routine to the mornings and instead of doing two days during the week and one on the weekend, I tried to work three to four days in during the week no matter what day it fell on. I felt changing my routines to the morning would better work as I was more likely to do the routine as I was not as tired in the morning as I was in the evenings.
- I used a Google sheet to track my data from December through February.



Data Collection: Excel Sheet

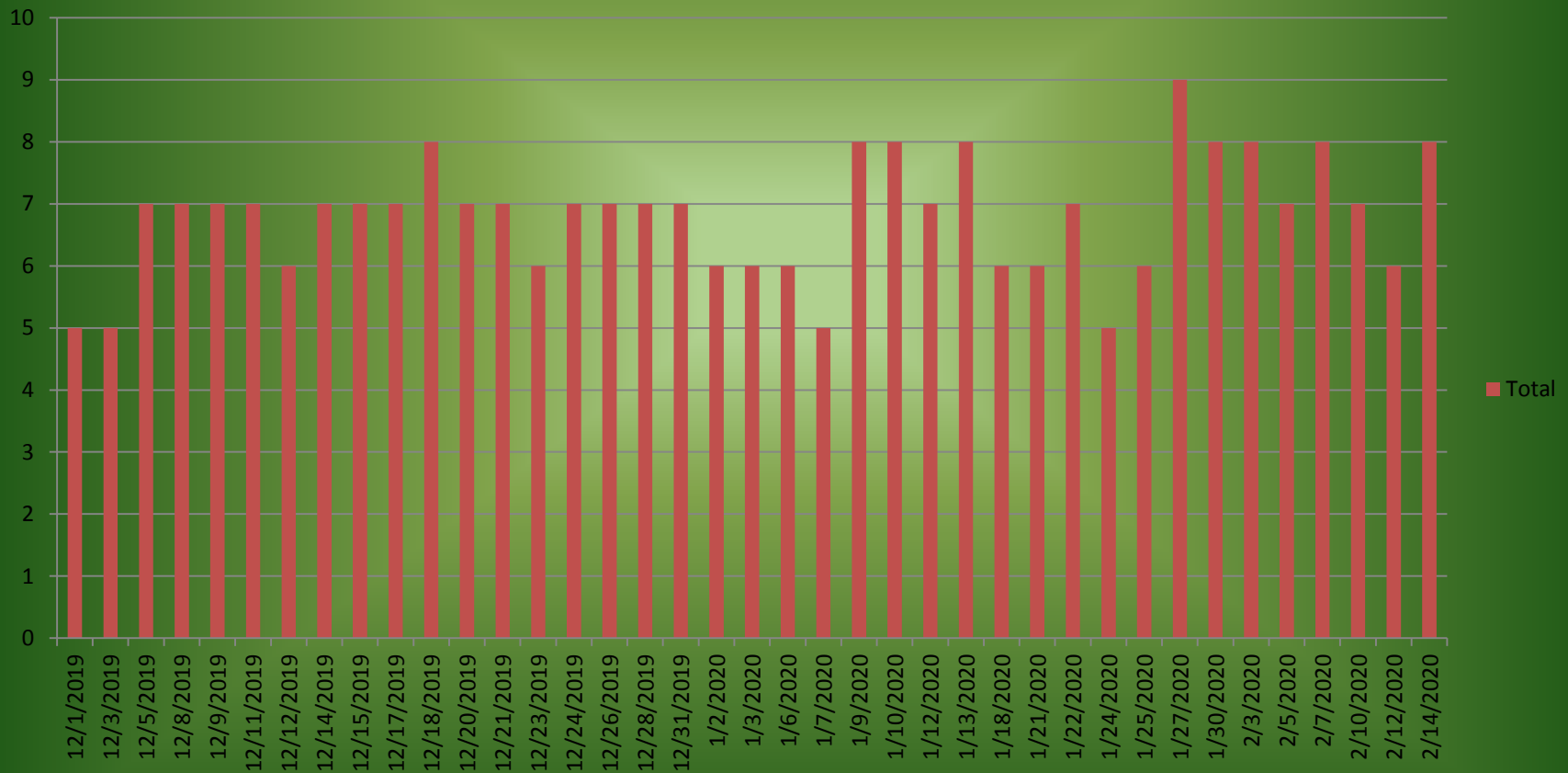
1											
2											
3	Date Exercised	Day #	Day	Type of Exercise	Time Exercised	Mood	Focus	Productivity	Energy	Notes	
4	12/1/2019	1	Sun	Cardio	30:00 PM	5	5	6	7	Sore from exercise, dealt with discipline issues	
5	12/3/2019	2	Tues	Treadmill	30:00 AM	5	5	5	7	Sore...discipline impacted mood	
6	12/5/2019	3	Thur	Treadmill	30:00 AM	6	7	5	7	Sore...discipline impacted mood	
7	12/8/2019	4	Sun	Cardio	20:00 AM	7	7	7	7	Sunday	
8	12/9/2019	5	Mon	Cardio	20:00 AM	5	7	5	7	Personal, discipline impact mood/productivity	
9	12/11/2019	7	Wed	Cardio	20:00 AM	7	7	7	7	Sore (getting better)	
10	12/12/2019	8	Thur	Treadmill	20:00 AM	5	6	6	5	Dealing with discipline/stress get caught up evals/Sleeping issues	
11	12/14/2019	9	Sat	Cardio	20:00 PM	7	7	7	7	X	
12	12/15/2019	10	Sun	Cardio	20:00 AM	7	7	7	7	Back pain, tweaked on Sunday exercising	
13	12/17/2019	11	Tues	Cardio	25:00 AM	7	7	7	7	Back pain still	
14	12/18/2019	12	Wed	Cardio	25:00 AM	8	8	5	8	Exams, staff luncheon, things cutting into day related to productivity	
15	12/20/2019	13	Fri	Cardio	30:00AM	7	7	6	7	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
16	12/21/2019	14	Sat	Cardio	30:00AM	7	7	7	8	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
17	12/23/2019	15	Mon	Walking	30:00AM	8	6	6	7	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
18	12/24/2019	16	Tues	Cardio	20:00 AM	8	7	7	8	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
19	12/26/2019	17	Thur	Yoga	30:00AM	8	7	7	7	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
20	12/28/2019	18	Sat	Walking	30:00AM	8	7	7	7	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
21	12/31/2019	19	Tues	Yoga	25:00 AM	8	7	7	8	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
22	1/2/2020	20	Thur	Cardio	25:00 AM	8	6	6	8	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
23	1/3/2020	21	Fri	Cardio	20:00 AM	6	6	6	6	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
24	1/6/2020	22	Mon	Cardio	20:00 PM	6	6	6	6	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
25	1/7/2020	23	Tues	Lower Body	25:00 AM	5	5	5	6	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
26	1/9/2020	24	Thur	Full Body Stretch	25:00 AM	6	8	8	7	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
27	1/10/2020	25	Fri	Walking	25:00 PM	6	8	8	7	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
28	1/12/2020	26	Sun	Cardio	25:00 PM	8	7	7	7	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
29	1/13/2020	27	Mon	Body Balance	20:00 AM	7	8	8	8	AD/Dean out/Surgery	injured foot
30	1/18/2020	28	Wed	Walk	30:00 PM	6	6	6	7	sore foot/girl fight @ school	
31	1/21/2020	29	Sat	Cardio	25:00 AM	6	6	6	7	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
32	1/22/2020	30	Sun	Walking	20:00 PM	7	7	7	7	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
33	1/24/2020	31	Fri	Walking	20:00 PM	5	5	5	8	AD/Dean out/Surgery	Girl fight at lunch
34	1/25/2020	32	Sat	Walking	20:00 PM	6	6	6	7	AD/Dean out/Surgery	
35	1/27/2020	33	Mon	Walking	20:00 PM	9	9	9	9	AD/Dean out/Surgery	College Visit
36	1/30/2020	34	Thur	Cardio	30:00 AM	8	8	7	8	AD/Dean Out/Dealing with fight from prior day	
37	2/3/2020	35	Mon	Cardio	20:00 AM	8	8	8	8	AD out/little discipline	
38	2/5/2020	36	Wed	Cardio	20:00 AM	8	7	8	8		
39	2/7/2020	37	Fri	Cardio	20:00 AM	8	8	7	8		
40	2/10/2020	38	Mon	Cardio	20:00 AM	8	7	7	8		
41	2/12/2020	39	Wed	Walking	20:00 AM	8	6	6	8	Discipline took most of the day	
42	2/14/2020	40	Fri	Walking	20:00 AM	8	8	8	8	Good Day	



Data Collection: Focus

Average: 6.82

Focus

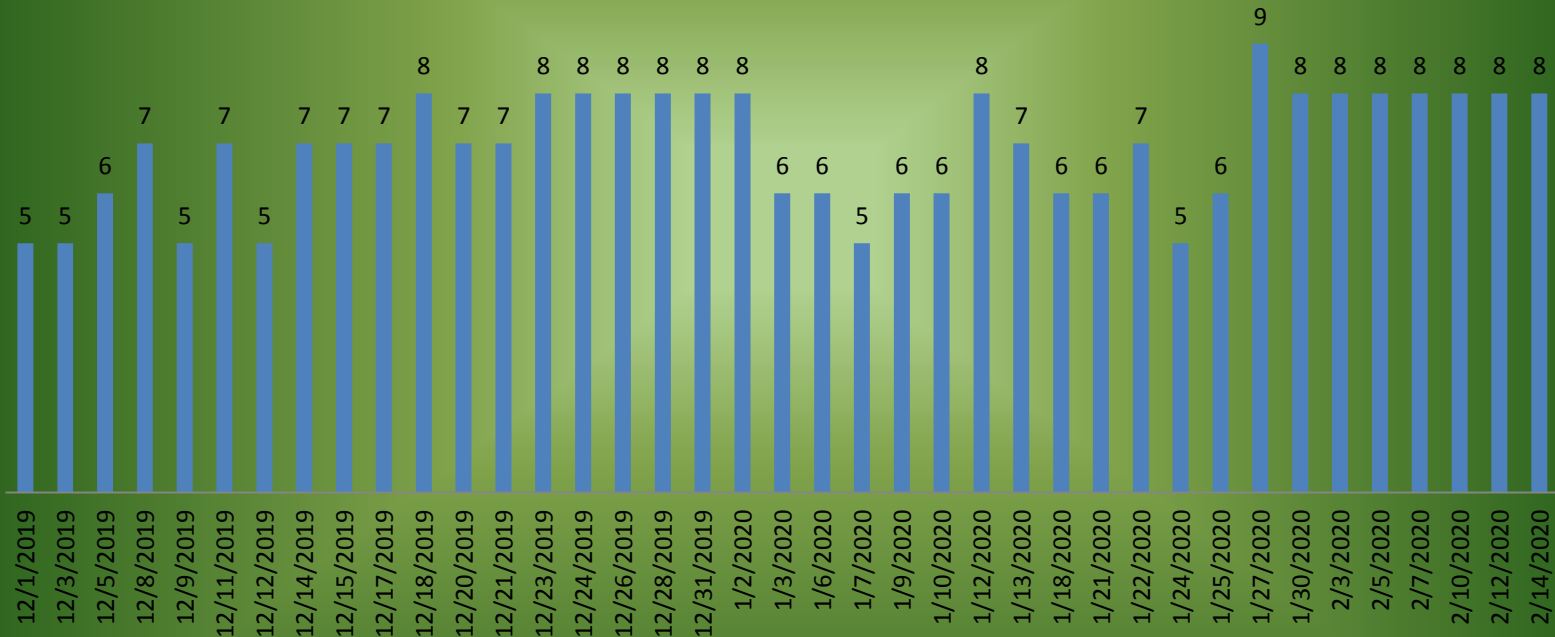


Data Collection: Mood

Average: 6.92

Mood

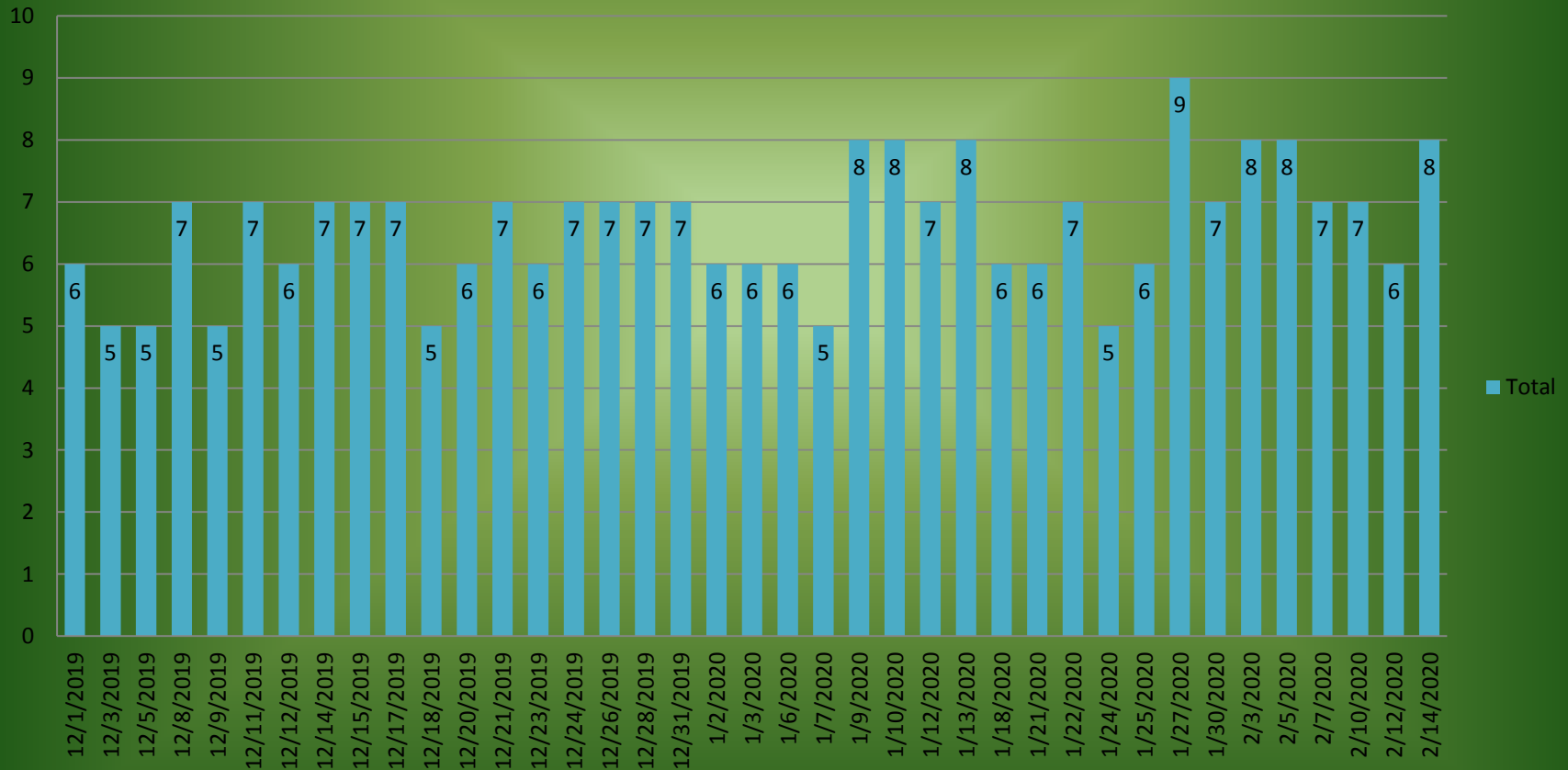
■ Total



Data Collection: Productivity

Average: 6.62

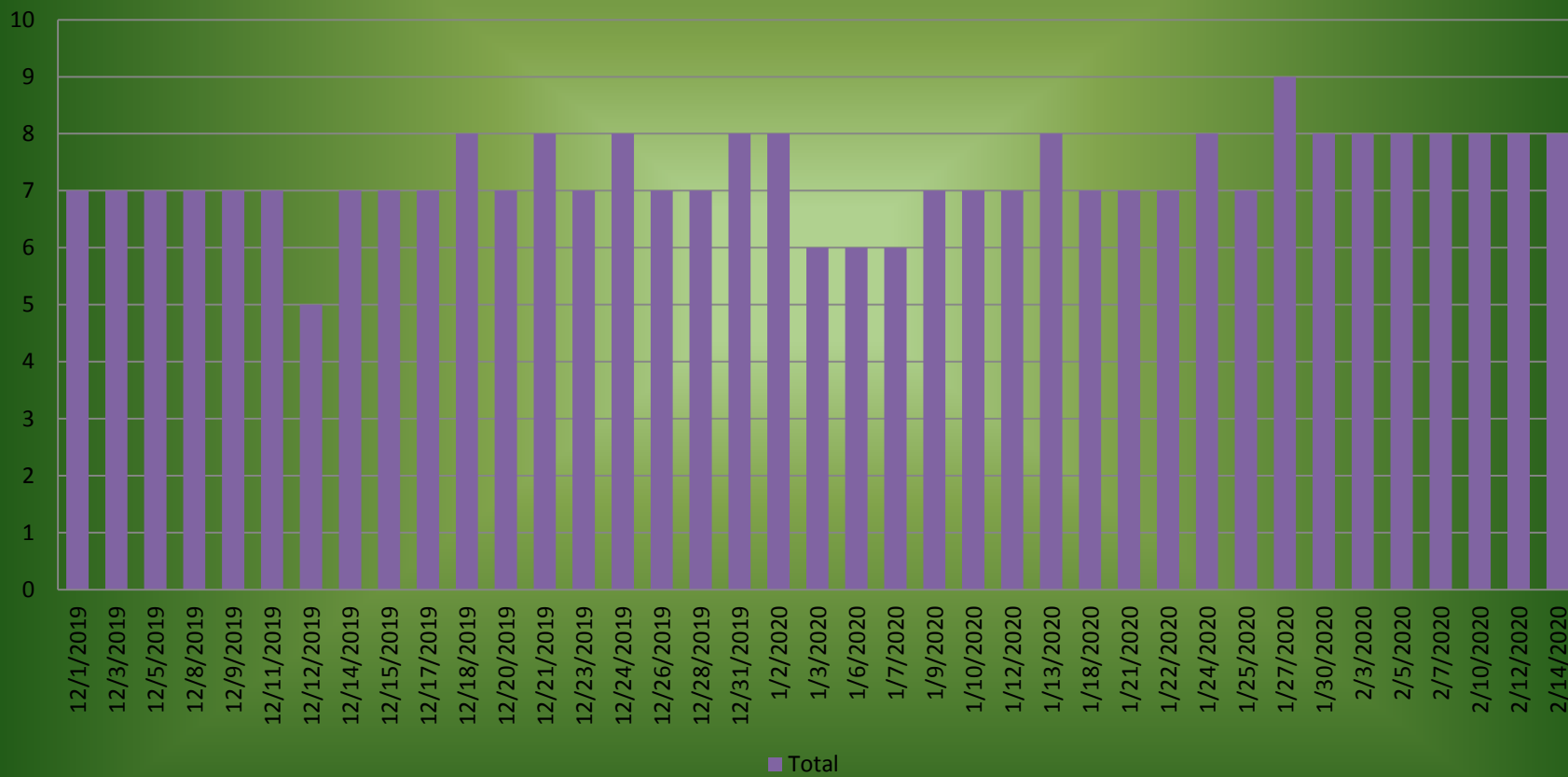
Productivity



Data Collection: Energy

Average:7.28

Energy



Data Collection

Phrases and Notes

- “You look tired”...staff comments.
- “Quit yawning”...staff comments.
- “You seem more peppy”...staff comments.
- “Have you lost weight? “...staff comments.
- AD/Dean out due to surgery.
- Increased responsibilities related to athletics and discipline.



Data Collection

Benefits of Exercise

How Exercise Boosts Teacher Wellbeing

Happiness, energy and confidence are boosted by focusing on teacher wellbeing.
Both yours and your students!

Do you ever feel that with all the demands on your time and energy as a teacher exercise is the last thing you can fit into your day? You need super-human levels of energy and motivation to fit everything in your day already.

It may surprise you to learn that the benefits of exercise go way past being able to squeeze back into your favourite jeans (and you will probably be able to achieve that too!).

Incorporating exercise into your teaching day will actually give you more time and energy!

Just 30 minutes of exercise a day can give a teacher:

- 1. Improved happiness levels.** A Penn State University study found that people who exercised, whether it was a mild, moderate or vigorous workout had more pleasant feelings than those who didn't. Exercise releases endorphins, the chemicals responsible for feelings of wellbeing and euphoria. And a happy teacher is a [more effective teacher](#). For more great tips go to [teacherwellbeingworkshop.com](#).
- 2. Stress relief.** Exercise combats the effects of physical and mental stress. Exercise increases concentrations of norepinephrine, a chemical that can moderate the brain's response to stress. You may not be able to reduce the stressors in your school day, but you can change the way you respond to stress.
- 3. Reduced feelings of depression and anxiety.** Exercise has been proven to assist with managing the symptoms of depression and anxiety, in some cases exercise is even more effective than medication. And it doesn't have to be long hours of exercise. Just half an hour a day can make a difference to how you feel and you know that depression and anxiety can severely impact your ability to teach effectively.
- 4. Sense of fulfilment.** The setting and achievement of fitness goals increases self-confidence. When you commit to reaching an exercise milestone and then working out just *how* you'll achieve it, you can enjoy the benefits of exercise and the confidence that comes along with it. Getting a sense of fulfilment from stimulus other than teaching, means you will be more effective in your teaching because you aren't trying to get all your needs met through your job.
- 5. Reduced risk of heart disease.** People who work out are less susceptible to a variety of disease because exercise boosts immunity. Students need reliability and consistency in their teachers. If you want to show up every day for your students, you need to be proactive in terms of disease and illness.
- 6. Better sleep.** If you have ever had to rock up to school and face your students having had very little sleep you know how much it can impair your level of patience, tolerance and concentration. Better sleep equals better performance. People who exercise usually sleep more soundly and are able to relax more easily without resorting to sleeping pills or alcohol.
- 7. An energy boost.** When you're feeling exhausted, the last thing you might want to do is squeeze in a workout but it will help you get more done. People who exercise are more productive. An exercise break in the middle of the day can boost productivity and if you go outside to exercise you gain the added bonus of fresh air and sunshine that can work wonders for self-confidence and happiness. Use playground duty to your advantage!

8. Improved Memory and Boosted Brainpower. A 2014 study found that exercise increased the size of the hippocampus, the part of the brain associated with memory and learning. Working out, especially between age 25 and 45, boosts the chemicals in the brain that support and prevent degeneration of the hippocampus. Studies have shown that cardiovascular exercise can create new brain cells ([neurogenesis](#)). Regular physical activity boosts memory and the ability to learn new things. It also improves blood flow to the brain and stimulates the growth and survival of nerve cells.

9. Increased self-confidence. The act of exercising can convince you that you look better. Regardless of weight, size, gender, or age, exercise can quickly elevate a person's perception of his or her attractiveness, that is, their self-worth. And when you feel confident, you achieve more, make better decisions and complete tasks more effectively.

10. Better performance at work. Studies show that people have less stress, are happier and more productive on days they exercised. Participants also performed better at work on exercise days.

11. Longer life. People who exercise live on average 3.4 years longer than those who don't exercise. Hopefully that means a longer teacher retirement or longer time doing what you love!

12. Greater creativity. Thinking of [new ways to teach an old concept](#), bringing fun and excitement to school requires creativity. After you exercise, creativity is at a high for up to 2 hours afterwards. When you hit the walking or running track, you refresh the body and the brain at the same time.

13. Inspiration for others. What you do impacts your students, sometimes more than what you say. When they see that you exercise or value physical movement, they are more likely to follow your lead.

<https://thehighlyeffectiveteacher.com/how-exercise-boosts-teacher-wellbeing/>



Data Collection

Excuses For Not Exercising

This is why most Americans don't exercise more

By Tyler Schmall, SWNS

January 13, 2019 | 4:04pm | Updated

I don't have time	42%
I don't have the motivation	35%
I don't like exercising	25%
Work gets in the way	23%
I feel too old	23%
I don't see results	22%
Don't have equipment at home	21%
It's too expensive	20%
It's inconvenient	19%
Gym is too far awa	18%

<https://nypost.com/2019/01/13/this-is-why-most-americans-dont-exercise-more/>



My Discoveries

- Learning Statement One: Exercise was beneficial related to impacting my energy level.
- From this AR project it is apparent that exercising on a regular basis had a positive impact on my energy level. The average of my energy level was 7.28 which was well above average showing that exercising is correlated to one having more energy. With more energy, one can have a positive impact on what they do on a daily basis as well as those they are around.



My Discoveries

- Learning Statement Two: Other factors outside of exercise have an impact on one's focus, mood, productivity, and energy level.
- The unusual circumstances of having increased discipline issues and more job responsibilities thrust upon me due to the Dean of Students/Athletic Director out due to back surgery during this time had an impact on the factors of focus, mood, productivity, and energy level. On days where there were discipline issues, the factors looked at were scored lower than days where there were not discipline issues. Exercising correlates to having a positive impact on one, but there are “other” factors that can impact the mood one is in, the focus one has, the productivity that gets done, and the energy one feels. Discipline is an aspect that can “suck the life” out of one if it is a heavy discipline day. Taking on more job responsibilities was an added stressor that had an impact on mood, productivity, focus, and energy as well.



My Discoveries

- Learning Statement Three: The exercise routine does not matter, what matters is exercising.
- One aspect of this project that stood out to me was that just exercising had a positive correlation to how I felt. I tried various forms of exercise ranging from walking, to Beachbody workouts, to treadmill; but no matter what type of exercise I did just exercising had a positive impact on me. I liked certain types of exercising over others, but just exercising was a key in impacting me in a positive way.



Where Am I Heading Next

- This project has made me realize that exercising should be a part of one's lifestyle as it has a positive correlation to one's health.
- While exercise is an ingredient in the pie related to one's overall health there are other factors that can impact such things as mood, focus, productivity, and energy outside of exercise.
- Job stress, which is common to administration, has a negative impact on the areas looked at and while exercise helps counterbalance the stress associated with administration one has to be willing to make exercise a regular routine.



Bibliography

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Presentation

- Ralston, Joe. (2020) A Word To The Wise, Exercise. Presented at the annual Indiana Principal Leadership Institute Action Research Showcase, Indianapolis, IN.