

FAMILY FITNESS

by Blake Lefkoe

Hawaii is an easy place to be healthy and active year round. The abundance of fresh fruit, vegetables and fish make it easy to eat well. Between the mountains, beach and ocean, there are endless ways to exercise. Unfortunately, many keiki grow up in homes where they are not exposed to this type of lifestyle. It is all too common for families to subsist mainly on fast food and spend most of their free time watching TV.

The YMCA is an institution whose staff is committed to promoting family fitness and dedicated to helping people learn how to live healthier, and as a result, happier lifestyles. They have a variety of classes and programs that make getting, and staying, in shape simple and enjoyable. In addition to teaching people how to exercise, personal trainers, healthy lifestyle coaches and volunteers/interns also offer education regarding diet and nutrition.

From a wide variety of dance classes to sports, and martial arts to performing arts, there are no shortage of fun ways for adults, youth and keiki to be active at the YMCA.

106 HAWAII PARENT DECEMBER 2016 / JANUARY 2017





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Between the mountains, beach and ocean, there are endless ways to exercise.

At the Nuʻuanu location, Studio 118 and Founders Hall are big open spaces where classes such as Yoga, Pilates, Low Impact, Tai Chi, Cardio Kickboxing, Zumba, Aikido, Boot Camp and Cycling are held. In addition to open lap swim and swim lessons, the pool also offers both beginner and intermediate water aerobic classes. Basketball and volleyball can be found in the gymnasium. Areas and mats for stretching, treadmills, free weights, ellipticals, stair climbers, cardio machines, etc. can be found in numerous fitness facilities throughout the building.

The Healthy Start Center (HSC) is an area geared towards people that have little to no experience with typical weight training or exercise machines. It is a great place

to learn how to use the wide variety of machines found there. In addition to a knowledgeable staff that is available to help teach people about health and fitness, the HCS also offers circuit training, boot camps and personal training.

One of the programs the YMCA offers is a childhood obesity intervention course called N.E.W. Keiki (N = Nutrition, E = Exercise and W = Weight Management).

The hardworking and loyal staff that run this class help children and their families reach their goal of living happier, healthier lives together. The program spans one year and the curriculum includes education on nutrition, fitness, mental health, healthy home environments and family issues. Extracurricular activities, such as hikes and visits to farmers'

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markets, are also open to everyone involved.

Jedd Ramos has worked for the Nu'uano YMCA for almost six years. He recently left his position as the N.E.W. Keiki Fitness Trainer and is now the YMCA's Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator. He believes that health and happiness are birthrights and is "passionate about helping people of all ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds and health/fitness levels, to become better versions of themselves in mind, body and spirit."

Part of Ramos' job is to supervise all the Personal Trainers, Healthy Lifestyles Coaches, and volunteers/interns within his department. He is dedicated to the idea that "Families that exercise together are healthier and happier together," and has put together a list of easy ways for families to get started.

1) BELONG: Families may join a family friendly facility, like the YMCA (The Y), that supports Healthy Living activities and programs for the whole family. These facilities should also provide fitness areas, gyms, pools, family events, group exercise classes, and other youth programs that are all available for the entire family. Affordable family memberships, as well as financial assistance, should also be available for those who can't afford a membership. The Y offers all of this.

2) WALK: Don't overlook this simple, yet underestimated form of exercise. Enjoy Hawai'i! Take a hike, walk around your local neighborhood, take a trip to a nearby farmer's market, or (re)explore Chinatown. While you're out, bring home fresh, local produce and cook up a meal together as a family.

3) VOLUNTEER: Another way to be

physically active as a family is to do something that contributes back to the community. Join a park, beach or lo'i clean up. Participate in a local race or competition. Partake in your child's school fundraising events. Your family will not only feel good physically, but also mentally and spiritually.

4) TV: If you are watching TV, squeeze in a quick exercise family challenge in-between commercials. See who can do the most sit-ups or jumping jacks during commercial breaks. Make sure to reward the winners with something they like. This increases extrinsic motivation to continue the competition with a reward system that will keep this challenge going.

5) OUTSIDE: This can be as close as your own front/back yard, to a nearby park, or even at the playground. Exercise by playing. Participate in a sport, throw a frisbee, kick a ball, or go swimming. Enjoy the natural environment around you.

6) NEW & DIFFERENT: Try something out of your ordinary. Jump on a trampoline, go fishing, race box cars, ride a water bike, whatever you can think of. The only limit is your imagination, so let loose.

Ramos has years of experience helping people of all ages on their path to fitness and has spent countless hours working with families to help them live healthier lifestyles. He states that getting in shape doesn't have to be complicated or difficult; odds are, it will probably be fun. His final words of advice: "Whatever you choose to use, do it as a family. There's nothing like a family working together, with each member having a hand in the process. This builds a stronger bond with each family member, and will result in a healthier, fitter and happier family." 🌈

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