

BLUE ZONES

“The human body is the best picture of the human soul.” – Tony Robbins



Rafael Campo, BZP Engagement Lead, leads a walking moai group at Eagle Lakes Community Park in January 2020. SUBMITTED

Boost your well-being with walking

Dave Osborn Naples Daily News | USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Blue Zones founder and National Geographic explorer Dan Buettner explained it best when he said that the longest-lived people in the world don't necessarily spend their lives doing strenuous exercise in a gym. • Instead, they move naturally (a Blue Zones Power 9 principle) through various daily activities like gardening or walking. That is great news for people who associate going to a gym being on the same level as getting a root canal. In an NBC interview, Buettner describes walking as simply one of the best forms of exercise that one can do without even thinking about it.

Walking does a body good on multiple levels. A study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine found that those who adhered to a walking program showed significant improvements in blood pressure, slowing of resting heart rate, reduction of body fat and body weight, reduced cholesterol, and increased measures of endurance.

Walking also has benefits beyond the merely physical. It has been shown to improve mood and give a big boost to overall mental well-being. In fact, doctors in Scotland prescribe “nature walks” for high blood pressure and anxiety.

A study in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences also showed that older adults walking 40 minutes a day, three times a week, reduced the normal age-related shrinkage of the brain's hippocampus, which is where the brain processes memory and emotions.

Here are some simple ways to incorporate more steps into your daily life and boost your well-being.

Own a dog

Unconditional love and companionship aren't the only benefits of owning a dog. In fact, dog owners tend to walk more. In a study published in the journal BMC Public Health, dog owners on average walked 22 minutes more per day compared to people who didn't own a dog. If dog ownership isn't

realistic for you, reach out to a neighbor or a friend who does have a dog and offer to take their dog for a walk.

Park in a spot farthest from the building

Most spend too much time circling around a busy parking lot looking for the closest spot to the entrance. Save yourself the time and hassle and choose to park farther away. You are guaranteed to find an open spot and it will make a big difference when adding up all those steps at the end of the week.

Set an alarm to stand up and walk for five minutes each hour

It's all too easy to find yourself sitting in front of a computer, television or at your desk for hours on end. Don't get trapped into doing this as extended sitting has been dubbed the new smoking. Simply set an alarm on your phone or find a reminder app that will help you to get up and move around for five minutes. If possible, get outside to also get the benefits of sunshine.

Form a walking Moai

Moai (mo-eye) is an Okinawan term to describe a group of people who regularly get together for a common purpose. Reach out to friends, coworkers, and neighbors to

schedule a time to meet and go for a socially distant and safe walk on a regular basis. A moai helps keep each other accountable and more motivated.

Join Blue Zones Project's Track Your Trek to the Moon

Start your New Year on the right foot by joining Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida's Track Your Trek, a free, community-wide step challenge. Last year participants walked enough steps to reach all 5 Blue Zones around the globe. This year Blue Zones Project is reaching for the cosmos.

The goal is for Southwest Florida to walk the distance it takes to get to the moon. Participants can join now to begin tracking their steps and then celebrate their accomplishments with Blue Zones Project on National Walking Day in early April. Walkers will also be entered into a drawing to win special Blue Zones Project prizes! To register, visit TrackYourTrek2021.eventbrite.com.

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc., Blue Zones Project is a vital part of Southwest Florida's well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information about Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida, visit southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com.