

Learning to take life one step at a time

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Recently my insurance company sent me a letter inviting me to participate in a walking program. If I joined, they'd send me a pedometer and give me access to a Web site where I could log my steps. They explained that as my insurance company my health was "one of their top priorities."

Uh huh. Let's be clear. What this letter meant was, "We know you just had your second baby. You are probably feeling overtired, overweight, and overwhelmed. We need you to *snap out of it* before you start camping out at the doctor's offices demanding sleeping pills and anxiety medication for which we will foot the majority of the bill."

Still, I was game because, frankly, they were right.

Walking would be good for me, especially since my jogging days seemed stuck in a pre two-child haze. Jogging with a double stroller is next to impossible and jogging sans children is even more so unless it's between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m. You may say those are simply excuses. I'd say, you're right, but they're my excuse and I like them just fine.

The invitation encouraged me to "look beyond the scale" to realize all the great benefits of walking. These included increased stamina and "energy to spare." I noticed that walking would not produce dinner each night; it would not think of creative and stimulating activities for my 3-year-old; and it would not nurse my baby at 4 a.m. But perhaps with my "spare energy" I'd figure those things out on my own.

So I joined.

Sure enough a week or so later my pedometer arrived along with instructions for the online step-logging sheet. And so I went walking. I walked and logged. Walk, log. Log, walk. And to be honest, it was fun to track my activity.

In fact, I kept my pedometer on at all times. I mean, we stay-at-home moms rarely sit down, so I felt obligated to log all the walking I did around the house. A step is a step right?

For example, I took 53 steps when microwaving a cup of lukewarm coffee. A load of laundry came in at 66 steps with an additional 33 when I forgot to add the bleach.

One afternoon I kept the pedometer on from 2 p.m. 'til 7:30 p.m. I captured my steps playing on the deck, making dinner, picking up toys, doing tubby time, making bottles,

putting two children to bed and finally pouring myself a glass of wine — at which point my pedometer ground to a halt on the couch. Over those five and a half hours of at-home bliss I took 4,803 steps or an astonishing 2.01 miles!

Still, I knew that wasn't exactly what the program had in mind. And, if staying healthy were as simple as doing laundry, I'd be in great shape. So obviously I needed to do some official walking of the outside, robust, sort. Fine. I strapped both girls into the stroller and set out.

From my house into town, with a stop at the library to return "Amelia Bedelia Runs For Mayor," then on to City Hall and back, took 2,875 steps or 1.2 miles.

As an aside, how on earth did I love Amelia Bedelia as a child? Further, how are we, as parents, supposed to endure repeated readings of her?

My typical loop around my neighborhood took 2,743 steps or 1.14 miles depending on whom we stopped and chatted with. Today I logged in 3,594 steps down to Independence Park and back with a detour through the Commons.

My one complaint is that the pedometer doesn't factor in that we live at the top of Prospect Hill. By the time I reach our little summit — all the while pushing the 900-pound double stroller — what I want is a perky Starbucks barista handing me a cool Frappacino.

Instead, at the top, just before my house, is a big patch of hot, breeze-less sunshine where I officially go from perspiring to full out sweating.

But overall I think it's going well. I'm looking beyond my scale to some cute new fall outfits and, just last night, I flung around some of my spare energy and ordered a pizza, received it at my door, and served it for dinner logging — 43 steps.

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