BisonTalk
Season 4, Episode 1

How to Stay Active during a Pandemic with Blaine Donoho

Cate Zenzen
With the onset of the global pandemic, COVID-19, many aspects of our everyday lives have been restricted, including the ways in which we socialize and exercise. The Center for Disease Control says the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. So how can we comply with this simple request and still meet our basic needs, particularly in health and fitness?

My name is Cate Zenzen and welcome to Bison Talk. I'm here today with Blaine Donoho, Director of Campus Recreation and Wellness, to talk about how we can stay physically active while still complying to CDC guidelines. Blaine, thanks for joining me today.

Blaine Donoho
Absolutely Cate, it's a pleasure to be on and I'm excited to talk about it.

CZ
Great, so let's start with your background. Why are you so passionate about health and fitness?

BD
Well, I've been an athlete my entire life. I started playing soccer when I was four years old. Soccer pretty much instantly became my sport. I played it all the way through high school, and would have played it in college if the injury bug didn't catch me. Everything obviously works out for a reason though, so I'm not too upset about it. I started working out, lifting weights, I believe it was my sophomore year of high school. I started doing that just trying to get into the gym, be a little more conditioned for soccer and the other sports I was playing at the time, and fell in love with the gym. So I stayed in the gym, have been in the gym, basically daily ever since. I like to experiment a little bit with all different aspects of fitness and exercise. I've competed in everything from powerlifting to CrossFit to distance running to a bunch of different stuff. I like the variety. I like to experiment, like I said, and see what kind of effects different types of exercise have on me, and between my own personal experience with that and then going to school and getting my bachelor's degree in exercise science and my master's degree in sports management. Between the personal experiences and the education, I think that I've well versed myself in exercise, fitness and health in general. And, of course, there's still tons for me to learn that I'm still learning to this day and will continuously learn throughout my life. I'm in no way an expert, but I like to at least consider myself an avid practicer to say the least.

CZ
Yeah, definitely. You've studied and you've experienced it.

BD
Right, right. Yeah. It became a passion, like I said pretty early in life and hasn't really left me since.

CZ
So how does this passion translate into your role at Lipscomb?

BD
Yeah, absolutely. My role being the Director of Campus Recreation and Wellness here. It really involves managing and coordinating anything to do with the SAC and Campus Recreation in general, which could encompass intramural sports and group fitness classes. So just being able to use my sports management background in organizing schedules, and coordinating instructors and student workers to work the SAC, and things like that. Plus, using my knowledge and experience in fitness and health in general really helps me, not only coordinate and schedule the things that happen within the SAC and Campus Recreation as a whole, but also relate to students who need help in that area. I always tell students my office is always an open door policy, of course right now a socially distanced open door policy, for anyone who wants to come in and talk about how they can improve themselves physically or health wise. There's a lot of different goals that are involved in health and fitness, and physical education in general. A lot of people have different questions, hopefully most of those questions I can answer. Some of those questions I'd love to learn how to answer with them. I like to provide my limited knowledge and experience as an avenue for the students, faculty and staff to learn as well. Between educating them and allowing them to help me learn as well, and then coordinating everything that goes on here, I feel like that's how I'm using my skills best right now in this position.

CZ
That's really cool, and we definitely need you as students trying to learn. So we'll touch on how students can stay active specifically on campus later, for now we'll jump into some overall changes that you've seen in the fitness industry. More people are staying, and working, at home as companies do what they can to minimize the spread of the coronavirus. This means that some days we never even step outside. Do you think the general perspective towards exercise has changed throughout this time of isolation?

BD
Yeah I think it has, and I think it’s changed in different ways for different people. Obviously, we all know that no one in this world is similar to one another in every single way. And we all have very different personality traits. It's kind of what makes this incredible world that God's put us in incredible. We're all completely different in so many different ways. I feel like this time of isolation, quarantine and uncertainty has been beneficial when it comes to health and fitness for some people, but it's also been pretty detrimental to other people as well. I have a lot of friends and colleagues that I've talked to that are very regular exercisers that work out five to six days a week. They have their normal routine and have been doing that routine for years and years. And when coronavirus hit full swing and they were forced to go into quarantine or isolation, it really

took them to a dark place in their life because they had to step out of that routine that they've been used to doing for years and years. And of course, as you know, and as many people know who do regular exercise, that exercise routine is oftentimes an escape for us. It's a way to de-stress and kind of forget about the worldly stresses that we have, whether that be at home, in our job or whatever. That's a way to escape all of it just for 45 minutes, an hour, two hours, however long it may be. So I know it's affected a lot of people in a negative way. But in another light, I know some people that it's been great for their health and fitness, because isolation and quarantine has given them more time to focus on it. So I know a lot of people that have talked to me in the past about wanting to start an exercise routine, but have never really found the time, motivation or the drive to actually get into it. I've heard them come back and tell me, now that coronavirus has hit and I'm not able to go into work, or I'm not able to go out and do the normal tasks and things that I normally do, I'm finding the time to actually set some time apart and exercise. And that's obviously great. Because if they can go through this entire, I don't know how long we've been in this COVID world now, going on six months at least, but if they can go an entire six months and just find a little exercise routine that helps them and that they enjoy then I think even once this COVID world is finally over and done with and life kind of goes back to somewhat normalcy, I think they'll be able to carry that over into their normal lives after that. It's kind of mixed. I've seen a lot of different avenues, a lot of different ways, and a lot of different structures that people are using. But overall, I'd say for the most part, it's relatively positive. I'd like to say the majority is positive that I've heard. I always try to look at the bright side of things. So I hope that's the truth and that's not just what I'm hearing and my personal opinion.

CZ
That's a really great way of looking at it. When we talk about routine, it would be hard because normally we might work into our day to go to the gym before or after work. But now if we're not leaving home, it might be a little bit harder to find that time. But you're right, maybe we do just have some more time to dedicate to fitness. And now that things have opened up a little bit more, there are still strict protocols when we leave the house like wearing masks and physically distancing ourselves. So how are gyms and fitness facilities catering to these requirements?

BD
Right, so some gyms are far different than others. I've done a whole lot of research over the summer when we were trying to figure everything out about how we're going to open up campus back to the students and the faculty, and provide a safe environment. Of course, I did a whole lot of research on what other fitness facilities, not only just on college campuses, but just fitness facilities in general, were doing to regulate guidelines and procedures in ordinance of COVID-19. It's very mixed up everywhere. There's some places that don't have nearly enough guidelines, in my personal opinion. There's some places that have just opened up and started doing what they were doing before COVID-19 was even a thing. On a personal level, I don't think that's smart whatsoever. Luckily, the majority of places that I've researched at least, or experienced myself, do have certain regulations and guidelines. There are some places that don't allow you to walk in and out of there without a mask on, and no matter what form of exercise you're doing they force you to keep that mask on. There are other places that want you

to walk in and out with a mask, but if you're going on a treadmill and running five miles they'll let you take the mask off. Because obviously, instead of COVID-19, you're running into the issue of, ‘well this person can’t even breathe, so what's the health hazard there?’ And then there's other places that I know have hired outside companies to come in every single night. They may shut down a few hours early, every single night, so these outside companies can come and do deep cleanings of all their equipment and spaces. Then there are other places that simply rely on their members to do the cleaning. They'll give them disinfectant bottles and just hope and pray that their members follow the guidelines, and do their best to clean up after themselves. There's a lot of different things that a lot of different people are doing. But I'd say for the most part though, athletic facilities in general have really cracked down on it, and are doing their very best with whatever means they have budgetarily to make sure everyone's safe, distanced and clean. I think overall, from what I've seen personally, places are really trying to do their best. But like I said, there's always gonna be those bad apples, those outliers, that just don't take it nearly serious enough,

CZ
Right, and you're so right with those masks. Breathing is an integral part of exercise, but also, your face, your mouth and your nose are what is spreading the virus. So you have to find that balance.

BD
Right. I found just from making the regulations within the Student Activity Center here, that's a hard balance to find for a lot of different things related to COVID-19. I feel like everyone, not just my area on campus, but everyone around campus is still trying to find that balance. It's a live and learn time period that we're in right now.

CZ
It definitely is. As an athlete yourself, how would you say that, instead of relying completely on these gyms or fitness facilities, or even the school that's making these regulations for us, how can we be aware of the way that we are integrating exercise into our daily lives? Or if we do go to a public place and we want to be active, how can we be smart about not spreading the virus, but also just trying to be active?

BD
Yeah, absolutely, and there's multiple ways to do it. I was just talking about how there could be some bad apples facility-wise. If you enter into one of those facilities that you can see probably aren't taking the types of precautions that you would be comfortable taking, or that you feel they should be taking, don't let that dictate the way you act and perceive the virus. If there's no one in that facility wearing a mask, you be the one to stand out and wear one. I truly believe that we live in a time right now -- and this is post-COVID and pre-COVID and everything else, but especially in looking specifically at COVID -- I feel like we're in a time right now where we have to lead by example. If I'm in an area for example, and I come to a gym and I want to work out and there's no one wearing masks, there's no one wiping down equipment, there's no one doing

this, that or the other that they should be doing, and in the world we live in today, I'm gonna try my very best to stand out. Be the one to stand out and do those things that I feel is necessary in today's world, because I know for a fact that I'm not the only one walking in there feeling uncomfortable. On the other hand, too, if you walk into a place and don't feel comfortable based on the health precautions that are being taken, and you feel as if you may be at danger health-wise in terms of COVID, I would recommend just leaving. It's better to not work out at all that day and find a new place tomorrow that might be a little more health conscious, than to risk getting COVID just so you could get your workout in that day. I'm a full proponent of skipping a day due to those health concerns. Like I said, there's plenty of places around that do follow a ton of regulations, a ton of guidelines that you can go to. It's all about just finding the right ones, and the ones that you're most comfortable with. So yeah, when it comes to personal fitness, and in light of COVID-19, follow the guidelines, follow the procedures, do what you feel you'd want others doing around you in order to stay safe, and I think you should be good to go from there.

CZ
So let's say that maybe we're like, 'I'm not even going to risk it, I'm just going to stay home.' How can we, maybe there's some resources, websites you can recommend for some at home workouts, rather than us trying to make up something on our own?

BD
Absolutely. Yeah, and there's tons of resources out there. We all know how vast the internet is. There's tons of resources out there, I wrote a few of these down. Some at home workout apps that I've either personally used myself or heard good things about, some apps would be; ROMWOD, that's ROMWOD. It stands for, "range of motion workout of the day." That's more of a yoga/mobility-type based app, and basically what happens is, it's a free app, but you can also pay for a premium version of the app. It gives you yoga routines, or mobility/flexibility routines, that you can do every day, and it targets certain areas, certain parts of the body. It's a great tool I've used myself personally, and it's because I'm naturally just not a very mobile person. I have never been flexible whatsoever, so that type of stuff really is necessary for me to be able to perform to my fullest ability in my workouts. I've used it many, many times, and it's a great app. Another app can be Beyond The Whiteboard, or it's actually abbreviated BTWB, I believe in the App Store. It's a CrossFit-based app that links directly with CrossFit.com, so it will give you the Crossfit.com workout of the day, every single day. And you can also look at the other people who have that app and see what their scores are for the workout that day. You can compete with certain communities of people in that app based off of those workouts. And if you actually find a CrossFit gym that you feel like joining or something, if they use Beyond the Whiteboard, which a lot do, you can actually join that gym community on that virtual level, and compete with them virtually through that app as well. Not that I'm sitting here saying that CrossFit is undoubtedly the way to go for every single person. It may not be. I did it for a little while and don't do it nearly as much anymore, but it is a great form of exercise, and it's one that many people enjoy, so there's that option. Then there's also a Fitbod option. Fitbod is an app that basically gives you a wide variety of different workouts, anything from high intensity strength training to if you want to focus on your core and do some core work, it gives you a wide variety of things. Some of the

workouts on there are great, some of them aren't as good. But regardless, it gives you things that you can pick and choose from and find what you're comfortable with. A lot of things you can do at home. Another app that I found is called Seven, and it's basically another high intensity interval training workout. The reason it's called Seven is because every single workout is designed to be seven minutes long. So it's a high intensity workout with a bunch of different workouts that are seven minutes. I thought that was pretty interesting and pretty convenient, too for, like we were talking about earlier, some people that may not have a whole lot of time during the day. Who wouldn't love a quick, seven minute workout that will make you feel like you've been working out for an hour? I thought that was pretty interesting. Also, if you don't want to go the app route and you just want something quick and handy, you can simply go on Instagram. I've done this plenty of times. Go on Instagram and go into the search bar and type in WOD. WOD stands for “workout of the day,” and tons of accounts pop up: WOD Roulette, WOD Buddy, WOD this, WOD that. Tons of accounts pop up that post daily workouts, a lot of them body weight-based, so you can do at home. You can pick and choose which ones you like. Some accounts are better than others, like I've said, but you can pick and choose which accounts you like, which accounts post workouts that might suit your capabilities or abilities. Like I said, I've done that many times myself if I'm just looking for something quick and don't have too much time to think of something on my own. I'll just go on Instagram and pick one out myself. Then on another level for Lipscomb students specifically, if you ever want any at-home workouts, no matter if it's strength training, endurance training, high intensity, I don't care what you're doing; if you have any questions about anything or want some advice on certain workouts, or want workouts in general, please feel free to contact me. This is part of my job. This is what I signed up for, and this is what I love doing. I love helping out students, faculty and staff with any exercise needs that they may have. So feel free to shoot me an email and we'll either set up a Zoom meeting, or we can email back and forth and figure out what you want to do and how we can do it.

CZ
I feel like interpersonal connection is a lot easier than looking at your app and being like, ‘Hmm, maybe I can try this.’ You’re a great resource.

Well, you're talking about social media, maybe even staying connected with people through other apps. This is what fitness is for a lot of people with group fitness classes, sports, other physical activities, these were opportunities for exercise and socialization. So how can we continue to stay connected to our community even if we are needing to work out separately?

BD
Right. There’s obviously a disconnect with that. With all the COVID-19 stuff, it's hard to stay connected to everyone in a whole lot of ways, and exercise is definitely one of those ways. Honestly, there's no real easy and simple answer to give to that question, but my best answer would be to, in the world of technology we live in today, there's tons of ways to stay connected virtually, or via phone. Whereas I prefer face to face conversation over a phone call or a text message, or an app or Zoom or anything like that any day. Right now, that may be the only way

we can have personal contact with people of certain kinds or ways. My advice would be just be creative. Think outside the box. If you have a group of people that, before COVID, you worked out with regularly or basically every day, just because you have to work out by yourselves individually now, there's no reason not to still motivate each other. Not to still compete with each other, make a group message. A couple of my friends, they actually post on their Instagram story every single time they're in a gym. They post a picture of them in the gym working out, and they tag about five other guys in every single post on their story, every single day. Those five guys are guys that they share a workout program with, and it's just an accountability thing. They're like, 'hey, let's post this on our story every day, we'll tag everyone in it so the guys that are in this program with us can see that, yeah we are in the gym, yeah we are doing today's workout, and everyone else can see it too and might want to join us.' Stay connected through that, stay connected simply in a group message. If you're a strength trainer, then you need to figure out what your one rep max is every couple months or so. Coordinate those days with your friends, and see who can get the best one rep max in different lifts or exercises. Do it all on the same day, make it fun. Even though you can't see each other face to face, that doesn't mean that you can't stop competing with each other or motivating each other. Think outside the box and find ways to use your phone, your computer or all these other different technological devices that we have in today's world, and still connect with each other and motivate.

CZ
Yeah, and I know that you were getting creative, even this summer with the Student Activity Center Instagram account, and then there's these Fitness Fridays. So let's transition into what you specifically are doing at Lipscomb to include students in this fitness aspect, but then also stay safe.

BD
Right, and like I said before, I'm not gonna sit here and lie. It's been kind of hard to figure out how we're going to integrate exercise, and group fitness, and things like that into our semester this year. Because exercise in general, there's a lot of contact involved, there's a lot of sweat involved, and usually people are somewhat in close quarters with each other. So it's been a challenge. But I'm happy to say that there are ways around it that we found, and avenues that we've gone down, that I feel are going to be pretty successful this semester. One of those things is our group fitness classes are still going on. Of course, they're limited in capacity, unfortunately. We're following all the government ordinances and precautions that we can, so as of right now, those fitness classes are on a first come, first serve basis. So we may have to turn you away if you don't get here early enough, but the fact that we're having them at all is a pretty big win for us. So don't be too discouraged with us if we have to turn you away. Just try to come to the next one and get there a little earlier because we're trying our best, we can only follow all the ordinances that we can. The other thing that you mentioned, Cate, is Fitness Friday. Fitness Friday is a new thing that we're trying out this semester just to give the students another opportunity to experiment with different forms of exercise and fitness, and experiment with some classes that we may not offer specifically on campus in our group fitness schedule. So on Fitness Friday, it'll be bi-weekly, we're going to try our best to bring as many instructors from off

campus, around the Nashville area, that we can onto campus, and either do a class outside or inside somewhere. They may be in various places just to add some variety. It might be in a random place on campus, it might be in the SAC, but it'll be somewhere different. Just to add a little bit of variety to the scenery of group fitness. That instructor will teach a class that, like I said, we don't typically offer in our group fitness schedule. For example, this Friday, we have a man named Brayden Melton, who's actually a student here at Lipscomb, teaching a CrossFit class. He's a certified level two CrossFit coach, which is pretty hard to come by, he had to work really hard to get that certification. He's going to be teaching a CrossFit class this Friday. CrossFit has never been a class that we've offered in our group fitness schedule. A couple weeks from now we're having an instructor from an Orange Theory gym come and teach an Orange Theory-based class. It's just different things like that. We want to add variety to our students' lives, and we want to expose them to different types of exercise that they might not be able to do here on Lipscomb's campus very often. When we were trying to figure out ways to integrate exercise in a safe way this summer, during the semester, it was one of those things that we came to realize, even if students don't want to go to one of our group fitness classes that we offer, or if they don't want to go to our weight room in the SAC specifically, I'm less concerned about that and more concerned with them finding something physically for them to do that they might enjoy. And if that means going off campus somewhere, right now this semester, I understand, that's okay. As long as you're physically active, I care so much more about your health than seeing you in our Lipscomb University's fitness classes. Even though I would obviously love for them to come to our classes as well. So it's just a way to expose all the students to different varieties of exercise and whatnot. I think we're doing it in a safe and healthy way.

CZ
Thank you so much for your dedication to students' general health and fitness.

BD
Well I really appreciate that, Cate. I'm happy to be in the role that I'm in, and I'm happy to help in any ways that I can. And it's like I said before, I'm no expert, but I can try my best to help you guys out, and help you reach your goals in any way that I can. So I'm happy to be here.

CZ
Bison Talk is an award winning podcast that takes a deep dive into today's current events and news with some of Lipscomb University's most interesting people. Bison Talk is produced by the Lipscomb University Office of Public Relations and Communications.
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