THE BALANCED MIDLIFE

12 WEEK STARTER PLAN

FOR WOMEN 50+



www.thebalancedmidlife.com

Welcome

Start where you are.

I created this plan because I know how hard it can be to stay consistent with movement in midlife, especially when energy is low, joints ache, and life gets busy.

This 12-week plan is designed to meet you where you are, not where you think you "should" be.

Just take it one day at a time. Try to set aside about 30 minutes when it works best for you. Then put on your walking shoes and go. Your brain follows movement, not motivation.

I'm following this plan right alongside you.

Let's do this! — Tracey

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Your 12-week plan and a sample weekly schedule
- Walking and resistance tips
- Ten beginner strength and core moves, with two simple workouts
- What works for me with food and supplements
- Optional starting and ending check-ins
- Weekly trackers for all 12 weeks, plus a full program tracker

Before You Begin

A few simple guidelines.

IF YOU MISS A DAY

- **1 day:** no worries, just pick up where you left off.
- **1 week:** repeat the previous week.
- **Longer:** consider restarting from Week 1.

BEST PRACTICES

- Go at your own pace, and gradually increase as you get stronger.
- Focus on good form to help prevent injury.
- Don't overdo it, especially if it's been a while since you've exercised or if you have health concerns.
- Check with your doctor before starting any new exercise routine or supplements, especially if you take medications.
- Choose a time that fits your energy and schedule. Many people like early to mid-morning.
- Wear supportive walking shoes to help prevent injury.

Disclaimer

Please read before starting.

This program is intended for educational and informational purposes only. It isn't medical or fitness advice.

The exercises and suggestions included are general in nature and may not be appropriate for everyone.

Always listen to your body, move within your own limits, and stop any activity that causes pain or discomfort.

Before beginning any new exercise program, talk with your physician or a qualified healthcare professional, especially if you have existing medical conditions, injuries, or concerns.

By using this program, you acknowledge that you are responsible for your own health and safety.

The Plan

Three gentle phases, each building on the last.

WEEKS 1–4 · WALKING

ACTIVITY	TIME	HOW OFTEN
Week 1 walk	15 min	3–4 times per week
Week 2 walk	20 min	4–5 times per week
Week 3 walk	25 min	5 times per week
Week 4 walk	30 min	5–6 times per week

WEEKS 5–8 · WALKING + RESISTANCE BANDS

ACTIVITY	TIME	HOW OFTEN
Walking	25–30 min	3–4 times per week
Resistance bands	15–20 min	2–3 times per week

WEEKS 9–12 · WALKING + BANDS OR LIGHT WEIGHTS

ACTIVITY	TIME	HOW OFTEN
Walking	25–30 min	3–4 times per week
Resistance bands or dumbbells	20–25 min	2–3 times per week

In weeks 9–12, you can switch from bands to light dumbbells, keep using bands with more resistance or reps, or do a combination of both.

Tips

Small things that make a big difference.

WALKING TIPS

- Start at a comfortable pace. You should be able to hold a conversation.
- Gradually increase your speed as your fitness improves.
- Focus on good posture:
  - Shoulders back
  - Core engaged
- Wear supportive shoes with good arch support.

RESISTANCE TIPS

These apply to resistance bands or dumbbells.

- Form is everything. Move slowly and with control.
- If you feel sharp pain (not just muscle fatigue), stop and check your form.
- Start with a band or weight set that has multiple levels, so you can progress as you get stronger.
- When it feels too easy, increase the resistance or add more reps (12–15 instead of 10–12).
- Slow down your tempo to make each move more effective.

Don't hesitate to modify any exercise to fit your needs and avoid injury.

Sample Weekly Schedule

Adjust the days to fit your life.

Weeks 1–4
WALKING

Mon	Walk
Tue	Rest or stretch
Wed	Walk
Thu	Walk
Fri	Rest
Sat	Walk
Sun	Rest or easy walk

Weeks 5–8
WALKING + BANDS

Mon	30 min walk
Tue	20 min bands
Wed	30 min walk
Thu	20 min bands
Fri	Rest
Sat	30 min walk
Sun	Rest or yoga

Weeks 9–12
FULL ROUTINE

Mon	30 min walk
Tue	25 min strength
Wed	30 min walk
Thu	25 min strength
Fri	Rest or yoga
Sat	30 min walk
Sun	Rest

- **Weeks 1–4:** walk for the time listed on The Plan page (15, 20, 25, then 30 minutes).
- **Weeks 3–4:** add a walk on Tuesday or Sunday to reach 5–6 walks per week.
- **Strength days:** alternate Workout A and Workout B, using bands, light dumbbells, or both.

Strength Moves

Ten beginner moves for bands, dumbbells, or no equipment.

In weeks 5–8, you'll learn these moves with resistance bands. In weeks 9–12, you can do the same moves with light dumbbells, keep using bands, or mix both.

TWO SIMPLE WORKOUTS

Alternate between Workout A and Workout B on your strength days. Each one works your whole body and takes about 20–25 minutes.

Workout A

- Squats
- Chest press
- Rows
- Glute bridges
- Dead bugs

Workout B

- Romanian deadlifts
- Overhead press
- Bicep curls
- Lateral walks
- Bird dogs

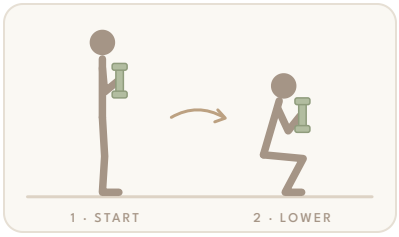
HOW TO

- Do 2–3 sets of each move, resting 30–60 seconds between sets.
- Start light. Many beginners start with 5–10 lb dumbbells or a light band.
- The last few reps should feel challenging, but your form should stay steady.
- When it feels easy, add reps first, then move up in weight or resistance.
- Skip any move that causes sharp pain, and check with your doctor or a physical therapist if you're unsure.

Drawings are a simple guide. For video demonstrations, search YouTube for the exercise name.

Workout A

Drawings show the dumbbell version, except glute bridges (loop band) and dead bugs.



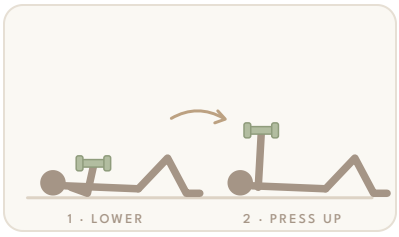
Squats

LEGS · GLUTES · CORE

BAND Stand on the band and hold the ends at your shoulders. Squat down as if sitting in a chair, then stand back up.

DUMBBELLS Hold one dumbbell upright at your chest (a goblet squat) and do the same movement.

2–3 sets of 10–12 reps



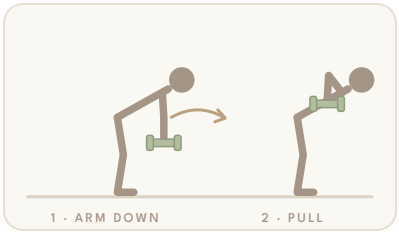
Chest Press

CHEST · SHOULDERS · ARMS

BAND Wrap the band behind your back and hold the ends. Press forward, then return slowly.

DUMBBELLS Lie on the floor with knees bent (a floor press). Press the dumbbells straight up, then lower until your elbows touch the floor.

2–3 sets of 10–12 reps



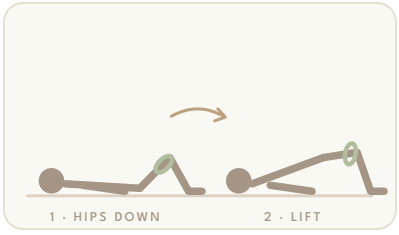
Rows

BACK · POSTURE MUSCLES

BAND Sit with legs extended and the band around your feet. Pull the ends toward your ribs, squeezing your shoulder blades.

DUMBBELLS Hinge forward at the hips with a flat back, one hand on a chair if you like. Pull the dumbbell toward your ribs, then lower slowly.

2–3 sets of 10–12 reps



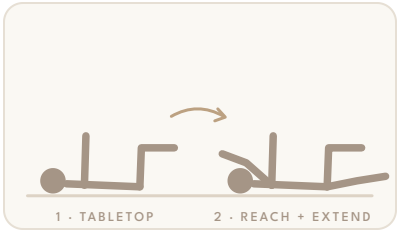
Glute Bridges

GLUTES · LOWER BACK · HIPS

BAND Lie on your back with a loop band just above your knees. Lift your hips while gently pressing your knees outward, then lower.

DUMBBELLS Rest one dumbbell across your hips, holding it in place, and do the same movement.

2–3 sets of 12–15 reps



Dead Bugs

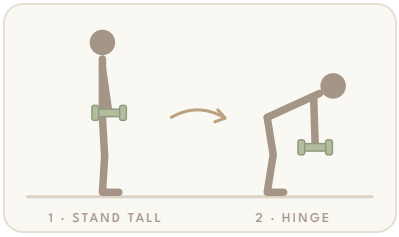
CORE · BACK SUPPORT

NO EQUIPMENT Lie on your back with arms reaching up and knees bent over your hips. Slowly lower one arm overhead and the opposite leg toward the floor, keeping your lower back pressed down. Return and switch sides.

2–3 sets of 6–8 per side

Workout B

Drawings show the dumbbell version, except lateral walks (loop band) and bird dogs.



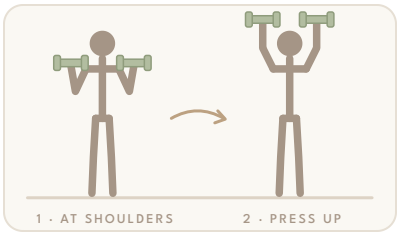
Romanian Deadlifts

HAMSTRINGS · GLUTES · BACK

BAND Stand on the band and hold the ends in front of your thighs. Push your hips back with a slight knee bend and a flat back, then stand tall.

DUMBBELLS Hold the dumbbells in front of your thighs and do the same movement, keeping them close to your legs.

2–3 sets of 10–12 reps



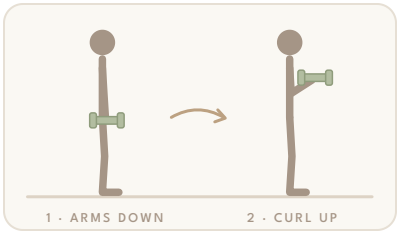
Overhead Press

SHOULDERS · ARMS

BAND Stand on the band and hold the ends at your shoulders. Press straight up, then lower slowly.

DUMBBELLS Hold the dumbbells at your shoulders, palms forward. Press up without arching your back.

2–3 sets of 10–12 reps



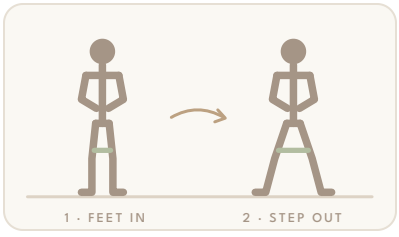
Bicep Curls

ARMS

BAND Stand on the band and hold the ends at your sides. Bend your elbows to curl your hands toward your shoulders, then lower.

DUMBBELLS Hold the dumbbells at your sides, palms forward. Keep your elbows close to your body as you curl up and lower slowly.

2–3 sets of 10–12 reps



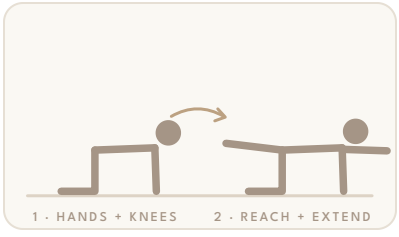
Lateral Walks

HIP STABILITY · BALANCE

BAND Place a loop band just above your knees or around your ankles. With knees slightly bent, step sideways, keeping tension on the band.

DUMBBELLS Band only. Keep using the band in weeks 9–12.

2 sets of 10 steps each direction



Bird Dogs

CORE · BALANCE · BACK

NO EQUIPMENT On hands and knees, slowly reach one arm forward and the opposite leg back, keeping your back flat and hips level. Pause, return, and switch sides.

2–3 sets of 6–8 per side

Nourishing Your Body

What works for me.

Food and movement go hand in hand, but you don't need to overhaul everything at once. Here's what has worked for me. Everyone's needs are different, so talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian about what's right for you.

HOW I EAT

- Protein at every meal, like eggs, chicken, or fish
- Plenty of vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, and green beans
- Very little bread or processed food
- Water throughout the day

SUPPLEMENTS I TAKE

- Omega-3 (I use a vegan, third-party tested brand)
- Magnesium glycinate at night, which helps me sleep
- Vitamin D3/K2

Please check with your doctor before starting any supplement, especially if you take medications. Your doctor can also check things like your vitamin D level to see what you actually need.

You can find the exact products I use on my blog at thebalancedmidlife.com.

Starting Check-In

Optional, for those who like to track progress.

MEASUREMENTS

Start date _____ Weight _____

Waist (in) _____ Hips (in) _____

Arms (in) _____ Chest (in) _____

Calf (in) _____ Thigh (in) _____

REFLECTION

How do I feel right now (energy, sleep, mood)?

Any health concerns or conditions to keep in mind?

Why do I want to do this?

What am I most looking forward to?

Starting Photos

Optional. Tape or attach printed photos here.

FRONT

SIDE

BACK

NOTES

Ending Check-In

Optional. Look how far you've come.

MEASUREMENTS

End date _____ Weight _____

Waist (in) _____ Hips (in) _____

Arms (in) _____ Chest (in) _____

Calf (in) _____ Thigh (in) _____

REFLECTION

How do I feel now (energy, sleep, mood)?

What feels easier than it did 12 weeks ago?

What was my biggest win or takeaway?

What do I want to keep doing?

Ending Photos

Optional. Tape or attach printed photos here.

FRONT

SIDE

BACK

NOTES

Week One

Phase 1 · Walking

Walk: 15 min, 3–4 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Two

Phase 1 · Walking

Walk: 20 min, 4–5 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Three

Phase 1 · Walking

Walk: 25 min, 5 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Four

Phase 1 · Walking

Walk: 30 min, 5–6 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Five

Phase 2 · Walking + Resistance Bands

Walk: 25–30 min, 3–4 times

Bands: 15–20 min, 2–3 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								
Resistance bands								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5

Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Six

Phase 2 · Walking + Resistance Bands

Walk: 25–30 min, 3–4 times | Bands: 15–20 min, 2–3 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								
Resistance bands								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Seven

Phase 2 · Walking + Resistance Bands

Walk: 25–30 min, 3–4 times

Bands: 15–20 min, 2–3 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								
Resistance bands								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5

Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Eight

Phase 2 · Walking + Resistance Bands

Walk: 25–30 min, 3–4 times | Bands: 15–20 min, 2–3 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								
Resistance bands								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Nine

Phase 3 · Walking + Bands or Light Weights

Walk: 25–30 min, 3–4 times

Bands or dumbbells: 20–25 min, 2–3 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								
Resistance bands								
Dumbbells								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Ten

Phase 3 · Walking + Bands or Light Weights

Walk: 25–30 min, 3–4 times

Bands or dumbbells: 20–25 min, 2–3 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								
Resistance bands								
Dumbbells								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Eleven

Phase 3 · Walking + Bands or Light Weights

Walk: 25–30 min, 3–4 times

Bands or dumbbells: 20–25 min, 2–3 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								
Resistance bands								
Dumbbells								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Week Twelve

Phase 3 · Walking + Bands or Light Weights

Walk: 25–30 min, 3–4 times

Bands or dumbbells: 20–25 min, 2–3 times

MOVEMENT

ACTIVITY	TIME / REPS / WEIGHT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Walking								
Resistance bands								
Dumbbells								

DAILY HABITS

Choose your own: water, stretching, sleep, or supplements your doctor approved.

HABIT	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Energy 1 2 3 4 5 Pain 1 2 3 4 5

How did this week feel?

What was my biggest win or setback?

Program Tracker

Mark an X for each day you complete, or an R for a rest day.

Weeks 1–4 · Walking

WEEK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							

Weeks 5–8 · Walking + Bands

WEEK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Week 5							
Week 6							
Week 7							
Week 8							

Weeks 9–12 · Full Routine

WEEK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Week 9							
Week 10							
Week 11							
Week 12							

Congratulations!

You did it.

Completing this 12-week plan is something to be proud of. You put yourself first, even if only for 30 minutes a day, to build a healthier, happier routine.

Take a moment to reflect on what changed, what felt easier, and what you'd like to continue.

From here, you can repeat the program, adjust it to fit your needs, or use what you've learned to create a routine that works for you.

I'm so proud of you, and I wish you continued success on your journey!

I'd love to hear how the plan went for you. Questions or feedback are always welcome through the Contact page at **thebalancedmidlife.com**.

With you every step, — Tracey