

App is a Fun Tool for Encouraging Personal Fitness

REVIEWED BY ROBIN BRADLEY HANSEL, PT

IF YOU ALREADY ENJOY WALKING for fitness but need just a little extra incentive to increase your speed or distance, Walkathon + Fitness Games by Striiv Inc. is tons of fun. I've already used this app several times since downloading it to my smartphone, and I must disclose that I'm more than a little addicted. The "Challenges" are a blast, the "MyLand" game is quite entertaining, and the opportunity to invite my Facebook friends to walkathons and raise donations for clean water charities is especially intriguing. I would be cautious, however, about utilizing it with geriatric patients due to a few visual challenges and potentials for distraction, thereby increasing the risk of falls.

This free app is currently available only for the iPhone, but an Android version is on the way. Striiv Inc. is a manufacturer of electronic pedometers, so the app does contain ads and links back to their products to encourage purchases. Although it is optimized for iPhone 5, I tested it on my iPhone 4 with only a few limits in functionality. Sometimes the app's footprint icon would start blinking, and it seemed to temporarily lose my position. Also, the drain

on my phone's battery was pretty significant since it needed to be open and running at all times to track my activity.

Walkathon + Fitness Games offers several interesting options for challenging yourself to walk more than you likely ever intended. Users are required to set up a profile. After entering your height, weight and age (you must be at least 13), the pedometer calculates your stride length. From there, you basically just start walking. If you use Facebook and choose to link your profiles, Striiv will permit you to invite your social media friends to interact with you.

I appreciated the highly visible green bar at the top of the screen highlighting my ongoing number of steps. However, I'm pretty farsighted so the app's "Challenge" feature was quite hard for me to see while walking outside without my glasses. Challenges are little pop-up panels with small gold lettering against a maroon background. These become visible while walking and offer the opportunity to either "accept" or scroll to another option by selecting "next." (Safety note: Staring at your cell phone while walking at high speeds is not recommended. This user threw caution to the



wind a couple of times in the midst of tight challenges and had some close calls).

Here's how it works. You may choose to accept a personal challenge like "500 steps in 20 minutes." The "cost" for the challenge might be 600 energy points, but the potential reward if successful will be 6000 points. Users are motivated to meet their selected challenges to earn energy points to play the MyLand fantasy island building game, get trophies and encourage other players to join a walkathon that donates money to clean water charities (with no cost to you).

Other nice features that were free included charts and stats detailing my daily calories burned, kilometers traveled, length of time spent in motion and number of steps with monthly averages. I could initiate a relay with friends or even chat with them in real time. I also had the ability to link other free fitness apps to my Striiv account like MyFitnessPal, RunKeeper and EveryMove. Once I reached 5000 gems in the MyLand game, I could even turn off the irritating external ads.

I definitely recommend the Walkathon + Fitness Games app as a fun and effective tool for encouraging personal fitness. Older patients might be instructed to simply ignore all the extra features and just track their progress using the green step counter. Teens and younger adult PT clients will likely have a great time with the MyLand fantasy game as well as challenging their social media friends to compete in relays and walkathons for charity while they get their bodies moving. ■

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Walkathon + Fitness Games by Striiv Inc.

RATING OF FUNCTION FOR PHYSICAL THERAPISTS	NUMBER OF STARS OUT OF 5
Ease of Use	***
Relevance to PT	***
Frequency of Projected Use	*****
Potential for Upgrade with Improvements	****
Usefulness for Therapeutic Intervention	***
Accuracy	***

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