



Dr. Zahi Fayad
Trail running on Ajax
Mountain in Aspen,
Colorado
while attending
the Aspen Ideas Festival.

Why Reach Your Peak? A Reminder of the Importance of Balancing Professional Development with Personal Wellness.

The following insights are provided by Zahi A. Fayad, PhD. Read about his vision, his role at Mount Sinai, and what inspired him to participate in [Step Into Health - Reach Your Peak 2026](#).

1. Role and digital twin vision. I'm the Founding Director of the [BioMedical Engineering and Imaging Institute \(BMEII\)](#) at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and I lead our Healthspan program at our Mount Sinai Health System. The [DigiTwin Project](#) I'm building is basically a longitudinal health "[digital twin](#)" of each person — we bring together advanced imaging, functional testing, blood and genetic markers, wearables, sensors, and AI to get one integrated picture of their biology. What I care about is measuring health markers trajectories and where someone's health is actually heading, so we can step in earlier and more precisely. The aim is to add healthy years, not just years.

2. What inspired me to join the Reach Your Peak (RYP) steps challenge this year. I spent my whole career building tools to measure and improve health, so it felt a little hypocritical not to be in the arena myself. It's also a good excuse to stay accountable next to colleagues who care about the same things. And honestly, a lot of the credit goes to Abby Schwartz and her passionate team sponsored by Jane Maksoud, our Chief Human Resources Officer— they've spearheaded this Reach Your Peak initiative at Mount Sinai and made the RYP steps challenge something our people actually want to be part of.

3. Wellness goal. In addition to Reach Your Peak, I'm into endurance and functional fitness, and right now it's all about HYROX. It's not for everyone, but it's something I'm into. If you haven't come across it, HYROX is a fitness race — you run eight one-kilometer segments, and between each run you hit a functional workout station: sled push and pull, rowing, burpee broad jumps; farmers carry, wall balls, that kind of thing. It's a brutal mix of endurance and strength, which is exactly what I like about it. It's a newer challenge for me and one I keep coming back to. I'm less interested in any single number and more in getting strength, aerobic capacity, and recovery to improve together. The one metric I am chasing is VO2 max — it's one of the best predictors we have for longevity, not just race results. And I periodize the training across the seasons — cycling in the winter, running in the summer — so I'm building fitness year-round without digging myself into a hole.

4. Adding more movement. While the structure I tend to use is running intervals, functional stations, and strength work throughout the week, there are other ways to add movement. Honestly, everyday movement matters just as much — walking the dog, taking walks with my wife, and playing tennis together too adds movement like participating in Reach Your Peak to add more steps daily. That mix is the real foundation. It keeps movement part of normal life instead of something that only happens at the gym.

5. Healthy habits developed. Respecting recovery is a habit I've developed. I watch my sleep and heart rate variability (HRV), and I let those recovery numbers guide my weekly activities and lifestyle habits. That one shift has made my training a lot more sustainable.

6. What keeps me motivated. Checking my progress does a lot of work to help keep me motivated. But mostly it's the mental component for me — I move better through everything else — work, focus, mood — when I'm training. Exercise is as much about clearing my head and staying sharp as it is about my body. The data that I track just confirms what I already feel as a result of my keeping moving.

7. Doing it with coworkers. It definitely helps to have a shared goal with my coworkers. Reach Your Peak creates a bit of friendly pressure, and it's genuinely fun to see colleagues putting work into their own health. It's the culture we're trying to build through the health span anyway — and it's exactly what Reach Your Peak is intended to do. It's working for sure.

8. Advice for someone starting out. Start small and stay consistent — one habit you'll actually keep beats a big plan you ditch in two weeks. The real challenge for all of us is fitting it around a packed schedule, which is exactly why everyday walking counts. And it's

a great idea to track something simple, like your daily steps or how much sleep you get each night, or just how you feel when you do those things. That way you can see it adding up. Seeing progress is the thing that keeps you going.

9. What does the Reach Your Peak steps challenge mean to me. For me, it's not one reaching the ultimate summit. It's about raising your baseline over time — being a bit more capable and resilient than you were last year. The peak keeps moving and chasing it is really the whole point.

You too can [Reach Your Peak](#). Questions? Please email Wellness@mountsinai.org.