

GETTING AND STAYING MOTIVATED

1. SET GOALS

Developing attainable goals is vitally important to long-term health and wellness. Creating realistic goals will help you stay motivated and set you up for success.

Goals revolving around statements like, "I want to be strong enough to lift my loved one out of bed without hurting my back" are equally important as "I want to increase my cardio-respiratory fitness so I'm not winded when I climb those stairs", or "I wish I looked slimmer," or, "I wish I was not so tired all the time." Determining goals keeps you focused and reaching for the results and benefits of exercising. These goals should be concrete, measurable, and divided into smaller steps. Start with simple goals and then progress to longer range goals. It's easy to get frustrated and give up if your goals are too ambitious. If you haven't exercised in a while, a short-term goal might be to walk five minutes once or twice a day. An intermediate goal might be to walk 20 minutes three or four times a week. A long-term goal might be to complete a 5K walk.

1.1. Reward yourself

Create rewards for achieving your goal. The reward can be a massage, a new workout outfit, a new CD, a session with a personal trainer, or a new piece of sports equipment - whatever you really want.

1.2. Have consequences

Have consequences for NOT reaching your goals. If your child doesn't do his homework, there are consequences. The same should be true of sticking with exercise. If you don't do your workouts, there should be a consequence. Have someone hold you accountable or take away something you enjoy until you get back on track. Another idea is to think of the long-term consequences of not exercising:

- ❖ Gaining weight
- ❖ Feeling bad about yourself
- ❖ Possible health problems like diabetes or heart disease
- ❖ Lower quality of life
- ❖ Not being a good role model for your family
- ❖ Not being able to do all the things you enjoy

2. START SLOW & STEADY

Many people, in a combination of enthusiasm and impatience, wind up doing too much, too soon, too frequently. That results in soreness, exhaustion, and feeling burnout - in other words, lack of motivation. Take your workouts one day at a time and enjoy them.

If you push yourself too hard at first, you may be forced to abandon your program because of pain or injury. It's better to start slowly and progress gradually.

As a wise man once said: *"Inch by inch life's a synch, yard by yard life is hard"*

3. PUT ON WORKOUT CLOTHES

Change into your workout clothes. Sometimes, it's just a matter of getting dressed that causes the biggest barrier.

4. JOIN A GYM

Join a gym or hire a Personal Trainer. For some, paying for a membership increases the chances you will stick with it. It also eliminates the bad-weather excuse.

5. KEEP A JOURNAL

One simple way to stay motivated is to look back on how far you've come. Keeping a simple journal of the workouts you've done gives you something you can go back to review and track your progress. Plus, knowing you have to write your accomplishments down may give you that extra push you need to get moving. Regularly weighing yourself, taking measurements, getting your body fat tested or even doing your own fitness and endurance tests can help you stay on track. This journal or progress chart is a great way to track your gains and give you feedback on whether or not your training and nutrition program is working or not.

5.1. Create a plan

If you are having trouble creating a fitness plan, you can consult a certified personal fitness trainer. These trained professionals will assess your needs, health conditions, ability and then put together a plan based on your interests. They will then guide you and give you instruction as needed. In many ways, trainers are used exactly for this purpose: a full-service, one-stop shop. Some will even come to your home and bring the necessary equipment.

6. FIND A TRAINING PARTNER

Try to find a good training partner who is very serious about working out. This will help motivate and push you to take your workouts seriously as well. A good training partner will really help you be consistent with your workouts. You'll not only have to show up where ever you workout for yourself, but you'll have someone else depending on you as well. You can even take a class at a local fitness center or hire the services of a Personal Trainer...either way...your committed.

6.1. Create a little friendly competition with your friends or co-workers. For example, the person who exercises for 30-minutes, three times each week for three months wins a prize. You decide what the prize is.

7. GET A MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION

7.1. Subscribe to a fitness magazine or online fitness newsletter. New tips and exercises can be inspirational and alleviate boredom. You will constantly be picking up new tips and training ideas that you can apply to your own workouts. You will also perhaps find inspiring pictures of how you would like to look. You can cut out a few pictures and post them in areas around your house to help keep you focused.

8. SCHEDULE YOUR WORKOUTS

Make a "workout appointment" with yourself for a specific time and place. Treat this appointment the same as you would any important business meeting. If you schedule time for your workouts in advance and plan on keeping your word, you're more likely to keep consistent.

8.1. Even short workouts

Erase the concept that if you can't do at least 30 minutes you're wasting your time. Exercise burns calories, increases energy, and improves your health - even in small doses.

9. HAVE VARIETY

If your training progress is slow, then boredom is sure to follow. If you find you're bored with your current workout program, then change it. There are lots of training programs that you can follow; there is no need to stick to doing the same thing day in, day out. Try something new; alternate walking or biking with swimming or a low-impact aerobics. You can even join a martial arts center. And when the weather cooperates, do your flexibility or stretching exercises outside. This will broaden your access to different forms of exercise which will increase your likelihood of exercising.

9.1. Incorporate in daily routine

If it's hard to find time for exercise, schedule workouts as you would any other important activity. You can also slip in physical activity throughout the day. Be creative! Take a walk during your child's music lesson. Take the stairs instead of the elevator at work. Pedal a stationary bike or do strength training exercises with resistance tubing while you watch TV at night.

10. JOIN A RACE

Sign up for a race and send in the entry fee. Whatever your activity; running, biking, walking, swimming there are plenty of races offered. Sign up and begin your training. This will help keep you committed and will truly be rewarding.

11. LOSE THE EXCUSES

Every day is different. What motivated you yesterday may not work today, so sift through what inspires you to find that one thing that will get you out the door. It may be pants you want to fit into or competing with your friend. Work through all the reasons you should workout until you find the one that works today. Some ideas:

- ❖ I'll feel good about myself if I finish my workout
- ❖ I'll just warm up and, if I want to stop, I can
- ❖ I'm going to dinner tonight, so I know I need this workout to balance my calories
- ❖ This workout will give me more energy for the rest of my day
- ❖ If I finish this workout, I can spend some time reading, watching TV or playing around on the computer

12. HAVE FUN

Whatever your activity and plan is, make it fun. A fun activity creates a fun attitude toward it. The fun factor of exercise, however, may not always be apparent. There are methods of keeping you involved and interested, and helping you maintain adherence to your plan. Aside from the fun factor, infusing variety is the top method. Mix it up! Some tips:

- Resist the urge to do the same routine every time.
- Change the path you walk.
- Change the swim stroke.
- Buy a new exercise DVD, or borrow from a local library.
- Get a new exercise mat or try a dumbbell or resistance tubing (exercise bands) for a little muscle sculpting.
- Buy or borrow new music.
- Trade your running shoes for a swimsuit
- Join your favorite sport