

Tips to Stay Motivated With an Exercise Plan

Including exercise in your already busy schedule is difficult. Sticking with it is equally challenging. The following tips and techniques will help you work through the initial adjustment period and help you find the dedication and determination to achieve a healthy, active lifestyle.

1. Set goals.

Goal setting is the key to motivation. Goals focus your energy and direct your actions. Be sure to set short-term as well as long-term goals. Short-term goals are the action steps you need to take to reach your ultimate (long-term) goals. Goals must be well-defined, realistic and measurable.

2. Find a “fitness partner” or join an exercise class.

Be sure to find a partner that is committed to the exercise program, has similar exercise goals and is someone whose company you enjoy.

3. Start slowly and know your limits.

Gradually increase the length and intensity of your workouts. Overworking yourself leads to burnout. Fatigue, insomnia and irritability are signs that you are overexerting yourself.

4. Eat healthy and get enough rest.

Poor eating habits and lack of sleep will zap your energy and your motivation.

5. Wear appropriate clothing.

Comfortable shoes and good socks are essential. Be sure to wear clothes that are right for the season. Wear layers of clothing in cold weather and cotton clothes in warm weather.

6. Add variety.

Vary the type, location and intensity of your workouts, or change the order of the exercises in your routine. Continually search for new ways to make exercise fun and rewarding.

7. Schedule your exercise time.

When you schedule your workouts on the same days at the same times, exercise will become a part of your normal routine. Not exercising will begin to feel unnatural.

8. Make a plan to accommodate weather conditions.

If you cannot exercise outdoors, or the roads are too bad to get to your workout location, have an alternate plan. Find an appropriate indoor location or exercise at home.

9. Tune up your workouts with your favorite music.

Invest in an MP3 player or other portable music device.

10. View each workout as having three components.

Imagine a warm up at the beginning, moderate to brisk exercise in the middle, and a cool down at the end. You will feel a sense of accomplishment after you finish each part.

11. Keep a journal.

Recording your activities will help you focus on the progress you have made, not how far you have to go.

12. Reward your accomplishments.

Determine an appropriate reward for achieving your fitness goals.