

What Happened to Those NY Resolutions on Exercise?

Less than a month into the new year, have you already abandoned your resolution to exercise more? Or perhaps you still intend to get started but just haven't managed to get going yet.

Jump-Start Your Physical Activity Routine

Here are some tips from the American Council on Exercise and other fitness experts to jump-start your exercise routine:

? Write down your goals and how you plan to achieve them. By doing this, you're setting your goals into concrete and showing that you're serious about them and committed to making these lifestyle changes, said Cedric Bryant, chief exercise physiologist and vice president of educational services for the council.

? Review your goals periodically to make sure you're on track, and upgrade them as you make progress.

? Schedule your workout times in an appointment book just like you would a business meeting or play dates for your children.

? Make sure you don't bite off more than you can chew. For instance, don't start out with a goal to work out five days a week if you've never exercised that much before, according to the council. Twice a week would be more reasonable, then you can add additional days as you become more accustomed to working out.

? It's important that people set realistic goals because too often they set these really unattainable, great expectations ... as opposed to taking small incremental steps to whatever end result they want.

? The idea of losing 30 pounds can seem overwhelming, but breaking it into five-pound increments will make it seem much more doable.

? Make sure your goals aren't too vague or too general. Goals that are not easily understood and somewhat ambiguous like, 'I'm going to exercise more,' (or) 'I'm going to become more fit,' people tend not to adhere to those because they're too nebulous.

? The best goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound, such as, "Over X period of time, I'm going to achieve Y."

? Use specific and manageable goals, such as, "I'm going to start working out 20 minutes three days a week."

? Remember that a short workout is better than no workout at all.

? Some people hit a plateau where exercising for a certain amount of time — say 30 minutes — feels like drudgery, so they don't work out at all. Every little bit of exercise is beneficial and counts. If you hit this kind of flat spot, either cut back on the intensity or cut back on how long you exercise, but do something.

? Pick exercises that are fun to you so that you'll want to do them, said O'Toole, a Connecticut fitness trainer.

? Don't choose a workout that's above your head. It's important to select a program that matches your skill level to avoid becoming intimidated, confused and perhaps injured.

? If you've grown accustomed to one type of exercise, such as aerobics, try something different to reinvigorate yourself, you've got to keep it exciting.

? Get someone to work out with you, whether it's a friend, relative or pet.

? Individuals who exercise with a buddy or a pet ... tend to do a better job of adhering to their exercise habit," Bryant said.

? Consider hiring a personal trainer to help motivate you and to give you tips on how to achieve your goals, O'Toole said.

? Psych yourself up with positive language. Instead of telling yourself that you're too tired to exercise, use "positive self-talk" to remind yourself of the sense of accomplishment you'll feel after you've achieved your goals and how exercise can boost your energy and help control stress.

? Don't give up just because of a little soreness. When people are feeling sluggish, stiff or achy, often they retreat to the couch when the body may really be craving movement.

? Winter weather and sick children may make it difficult to get out to the gym, so exercise videos and DVDs can be handy, said O'Toole. Hers, available at ozonefitness.net, includes cardio, strength training and abdominal exercises.

? Don't forget to reward yourself for a job well-done.

? Recovery and rest is a very important element to being able to exercise for a long, sustained period of time. ... Every now and then, your body is going to need a break, and you want to be wise enough to listen to your body's cues."

? Practice good nutrition, and avoid "crazy diets," O'Toole said.

? Making sure you're drinking enough water can help to combat overeating, she said.

? Don't let setbacks keep you down. Just because you haven't started to exercise yet or haven't exercised consistently doesn't mean you have to drop the idea all together.

? Refocus yourself every week. Even if you have a bad day, there's always tomorrow to get right back on track."