



Getting and Staying Motivated to Be Physically Active

By Sheri Colberg, PhD

This time of year, all of the fitness clubs and gyms run specials to bring in new members, and they know—and even count on the fact that—most of those people will no longer be regularly attending classes or doing workouts by the time spring hits. How do you avoid becoming one of those exercise dropouts?

Even elite athletes have some days when they are not as motivated to exercise. You know those days—the ones when you have trouble putting on your exercise gear, let alone finishing your planned workout. For the sake of your blood glucose and your health, do not use one or two bad days as an excuse to discontinue an otherwise important and relevant exercise or training routine.

Here is a list of motivating behaviors and ideas for regular exercisers and anyone else who may not always feel motivated to work out:

- Identify any barriers or obstacles keeping you from being active, such as the fear of getting low during exercise, and come up with ways to overcome them.
- Get yourself an exercise buddy (or a dog that needs to be walked).
- Use sticker charts or other motivational tools to track your progress.
- Schedule structured exercise into your day on your calendar or to-do list.
- Break your larger goals into smaller, realistic stepping stones (e.g., daily and weekly physical activity goals).
- Reward yourself for meeting your goals with noncaloric treats or outings.
- Plan to do physical activities that you enjoy as often as possible.
- Wear a pedometer (at least occasionally) as a reminder to take more daily steps.
- Have a backup plan that includes alternative activities in case of inclement weather or other barriers to your planned exercise.
- Distract yourself while you exercise by reading a book or magazine, watching TV, listening to music or a book on tape, or talking with a friend.

- Simply move more all day long to maximize your unstructured activity time, and break up sitting with frequent activity breaks.
- Do not start out exercising too intensely, or you may become discouraged or injured.
- If you get out of your normal routine, and are having trouble getting restarted, take small steps in that direction.

As for other tricks that you can use, start with reminding yourself that regular exercise can lessen the potential effect of most of your cardiovascular risk factors, including elevated cholesterol levels, insulin resistance, obesity, and hypertension. Even just walking regularly can lengthen your life, and if you keep your blood glucose better managed with the help of physical activity, you may be able to prevent or delay almost all the potential long-term health complications associated with diabetes.

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