

Get Moving!: Top 7 Exercise Motivation Secrets

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Let's face it; we all know we need to exercise. Many of us know how to exercise. How many books and videos do you own? How many gym memberships have you had in your life? You may even be an expert on the perfect exercises for your body. But you're not doing it! Why? Well the problem isn't lack of knowledge, its lack of motivation. Does this sound familiar?

What can you do? Focus less on gaining more knowledge, and more on getting and staying motivated. As you become more consistent and start seeing results, you will be able to apply all that knowledge. Here are seven secrets to getting and staying motivated:

Secret One: Find Your "Why"

In order to be successful at any endeavor, we must have a good reason for doing it in the first place. Exercise is no exception. What will get you up in the morning on those cold, dark days when you just want to stay in bed? Many people say "because I want to lose weight" or "I want to be fit". While these are good goals, they are not good enough reasons for long term success. You must dig deeper. What is important to you? What do you value in life? Answer these questions, then see how a regular exercise program can support your values.

Secret Two: Make a Commitment

Once you find your "why", it's time to make a commitment. Here is a definition of commitment you may not have heard: a commitment is the ability to carry out a worthy decision, even when the excitement of making that decision has passed. Read that definition again, and really understand it. How many times have you been excited to start an exercise program, only to become bored or distracted by other things? As soon as the excitement passes, so do your exercise plans. Be sure you are ready to commit, and if you are not, then commit to not exercising. That way you can let go of the guilt and commit when you are ready.

Secret Three: Set Daily, Measurable and Realistic Goals

If your only goal is to lose 40 pounds it will be a while before you feel successful. After all, it can take a while to see such results. Rather, set daily measurable, achievable goals that allow you to feel successful every day. Keep a weekly diary and set goals each day for what kind of exercise you will do, how long you will workout, how hard you will exercise, etc.

Secret Four: Keep Track of Your Progress

After you set your goals and write them down, you want to also chart your progress. Be sure to write down your daily achievements to compare to your goals. This will become extremely motivating as you see yourself meeting your goals. With consistent exercise, you will also see your workouts becoming easier and your ability to work harder and longer. This often happens faster than visible results on your body, such as weight loss or definition. Many people become frustrated and quit exercise right before big changes are about to happen, because they don't see the results on their bodies. Seeing measurable progress on paper will keep you motivated while you work towards the bigger goals you have set for yourself.



Secret Five: Get Objective Feedback

You may know what a good workout feels like - you have that endorphin "high" after exercise, or you have energy to spare all day long. But do you know what an effective workout feels like? It is hard to know how effective your workout is every day without waiting for weeks or months to see the results. What if you could see day after day how many calories you burned, or what your heart rate was each workout? Using a heart rate monitor can tell you if you are working too hard or not hard enough. What about calories? An accelerometer can tell you all day long how many calories you are burning and keep you motivated to move! When you look for ways to add activity to your day it becomes a fun game and you can instantly see the results.

Secret Six: Avoid the "All or Nothing" Mentality

Have you had plans to exercise five times one week and the first day something happened and you didn't exercise? When this happens, many people give up on the rest of the week. This is known as the All or Nothing Mentality. Keep away from this - it doesn't work. If you approach your exercise and nutrition program in that manner, you set yourself up for failure. Allow for flexibility in your exercise plans and know one missed day is not a setback.

Secret Seven: Be Accountable!

About 95% of all participants in an exercise program will stop exercising. Why? No support. Research has shown that exercisers with some kind of support system have a better chance of continuing exercise. You need someone who will also hold you accountable for your exercise. Working with someone like a personal trainer, a coach or a mentor will give you the support you need and you can work together to identify barriers to keeping your commitment and develop strategies to overcome these obstacles. Most people need far more support, follow up and accountability than they think to start and maintain an exercise program.

In the interest of avoiding the all or nothing mentality, don't try to implement all these secrets at once. Pick one or two and when you have those working, add another secret. Just like results from exercise, building motivation and consistency will take time. Fitness is not just about reaching a destination, it is a journey where you will learn much about yourself and grow from your experiences. Keep your short term goals in mind, and enjoy the journey to reaching your ultimate goals.