

Exercise: Staying Motivated



How do you stay on track?

If you've started a program to get more active but are having trouble keeping it going, it may help to figure out what's getting in your way. Then you can decide how to work around those barriers.

Illness, travel, work, and just having a bad day are a few of the things that may keep you from staying on track. Your goal is to get back in the habit and find a way to make physical activity a routine part of your life.

Remember that you can't create a habit overnight. Keep at it, even if you slip up along the way. It can take at least 3 months of repetition to form a habit. So every day that you follow your plan to be more active, you take a step in the right direction.

How can you make activity a habit?

Have your own reasons

Think about why staying active is important to you. For example:

- Do you exercise to stay healthy?
- Do you like how exercise makes you feel?
- Do you enjoy being active as a way to spend time with family and friends?
- Do you think being more active will help you control your weight?

Set goals

Include short-term and long-term goals that you can measure easily. For example:

- Is your long-term goal to reach a healthy weight or walk or run a 5K race?
- Is your long-term goal to lower your blood pressure or cholesterol?
- Could you set a short-term goal to walk the dog 3 times this week or sign up for dance lessons?

Think about what might get in your way, and prepare for slip-ups

When you slip up, don't get mad at yourself or feel guilty. Figure out what happened. Learn from your slip-ups.

- Do you feel that you don't have time to exercise? Look at other people who are active and busy. Talk with them about how they fit in physical activity.
- Does the weather get in your way? Try a variety of indoor activities.
- Are you bored with your routine? Watch a movie while you exercise at home. Listen to a podcast while you go for a walk or a run. Take a dance or yoga class.

A plan to help you stay focused

Use the sections below to write down your reasons and goals, and to deal with things that may keep you from staying active. Putting your ideas in writing may help you focus.

What are your reasons for staying active?

What are your short-term and long-term goals?

What keeps you from being active? How can you get past it?