

Movement Motivation

We all know the amazing benefits of a regular exercise program. They include more energy, a streamlined waistline, an improved mood, more sound sleep, reduced stress and anxiety, strengthened heart and muscles, improved self-esteem, improved productivity, lengthened lifespan, and an improved quality of life. Yet with the other demands of life, exercise doesn't always get the time it deserves. For this reason, here are 28 ways to find and keep your movement motivation high.

Before starting an exercise program, check with your family physician and/or bariatric surgeon. If you have knee, back or other limitations, consider asking your family physician for a physical therapy referral. A physical therapist can help you to design a fitness program around your limitations.

- 1) Find your reasons for exercising. Write down every reason that you have for wanting to exercise. You should have a pretty extensive list if you take the time to think of all the benefits you will gain from a regular exercise program. Your list may include health benefits, increased energy to do the things you love to do, being able to wear different clothing, being able to participate in activities, decreased stress, etc. Keep this list handy for times when your motivation wavers.
- 2) Let music set the tone and pace of your exercise. Feel yourself pick up the pace as you hear a favorite song.
- 3) Books on tape are a great way to add to your workout enjoyment. It's hard to stop when you are in the middle of the chapter—you might as well keep exercising until you get to the end.
- 4) Exercise with a friend. Not only can you enjoy each other's company, but you can also keep each other accountable.
- 5) Exercise 6-7 days a week rather than 3-4 days a week. Daily exercise produces a habit much faster and the benefits show up more quickly, fueling motivation.
- 6) Get organized. Have your workout clothing, music, and water bottle ready to go ahead of time.
- 7) Set up a consistent time of day. Choose the time of day when you feel the most energetic.
- 8) Don't be a fair weather exerciser. If you are an outside exerciser, have an indoor back-up plan for bad weather situations.
- 9) Train for a local 5K or 10K walk or a benefit walk.
- 10) Reward yourself. Consider putting a few dollars in a jar each time you exercise--buy yourself a non-food reward as the money adds up.
- 11) Commit to an exercise program. Schedule it. Commit to it.
- 12) Set and measure goals. Set short-term measurable goals. These smaller goals will lead to long-term gains.

- 13) Track your progress. It is motivating to see yourself meeting the goals that you have set. You may not see the scale move quickly, but you can see on paper that you are able to walk for 2 miles easily while a month ago you could only walk 1 mile.
- 14) Think of exercise as a journey, rather than a destination. If you miss a day, don't give up. It is all a part of the road that will take you to a healthier life.
- 15) Take bi-monthly photos and measurements. You may not see the changes day-to-day, but look at a photo or set of measurements from last summer and you will see the results of your efforts.
- 16) Focus on how you feel after a workout. There is a sense of accomplishment, exhilaration, and a positive feeling about taking control of your health.
- 17) Try different activities that are fun. You may want to try cross-country skiing, a family game of Frisbee, bike riding or other activities.
- 18) Use positive self-talk. Try something like, "I am getting stronger every day," or "I am making a big impact on my health and well-being."
- 19) Visualize yourself reaching your goal.
- 20) Read health and fitness magazines. They often have success stories and articles that motivate.
- 21) Rather than reaching for an unhealthy way to unwind, go for a quick walk. Exercise is one of the best stress managers around. There's nothing like a good workout to think through a problem and come out with a new perspective or game plan. Exercise decreases stress hormones and increases feel-good hormones.
- 22) Enjoy the quiet "you" time of exercise. Think of it as an opportunity to get away from all of the chaos around you and do something nice for yourself.
- 23) Consider a coach or trainer to get you started and to keep you motivated.
- 24) Take a class--yoga, spinning, Pilates or cardio—you choose. You'll be motivated to show up and work out.
- 25) Use motivational quotes. Post them on your computer screen, in your bathroom, in your car or anywhere you will see them throughout the day.
- 26) Think about the biggest obstacles in your way to consistent exercise. Make a list of ways to overcome them.
- 27) Reduce the amount of time that you spend watching TV. Not only is TV a time and energy zapper, it also encourages snacking, and the advertisements bombard you with food, food and more food.
- 28) Involve your friends and family to either cheer you on or join you. Your children can benefit from time with you; you can model a healthy activity level and the benefits of increased activity--try to find a type of exercise that includes them.