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8 Tips To Help Keep Your Exercise Routine On Track

It's easy to talk yourself out of exercising. Even when you have the best intentions to work out, excuses are so easy to find. "I'm too tired," "I'm busy," or "The weather is bad." The right attitude and a few tricks can keep your fitness routine on track. Use these tips to stay motivated:

- 1. Do it for yourself:** Studies show that people who are "externally motivated", meaning they hit the gym just to look good for an event, don't stick with their routine. People who are "internally motivated", exercise because they love it and are the ones who usually stick with their exercise routine.
- 2. Start slow:** You would never try to run 10 miles on day one, right? When you do too much too soon, you'll end up sore, injured, and discouraged. Take it easy as you get started. Maybe you only run a quarter of a mile your first week. When that becomes easy, you can make it more challenging.
- 3. Mix it up:** Do different types of workouts to keep things interesting and to exercise different muscle groups. If the elliptical machine is usually your thing, hop on the stair climber for some cardio instead. Also, switch between machines and free weights when you strength train. You don't have to reinvent your entire routine every week, but you do want to shift it around a little.
- 4. Bring a friend:** When your inner demons order you to hit the couch instead of the treadmill, a workout partner can steer you back in the right direction. It's easier to bail out on the gym than on the friend who waits for you there. Studies show you'll also work out longer when you have a pal along.
- 5. Make exercise a daily habit:** Your workout should be just as much a habit as brushing your teeth or eating breakfast. When it's part of your routine, you won't even have to think about it. In a few months, fitness can be a regular feature of your day. If you can't complete 30 minutes at once, break exercise sessions up into 10 or 15-minute increments.
- 6. Set realistic goals:** You are not going to lose 30 pounds in a week. Aim for a goal that's realistic as a first step. For instance, increase your workout schedule from 2 to 3 days a week, or exercise for 15 more minutes each time. It's better to work within your limits and gradually get stronger.
- 7. Track activity:** Keep a fitness journal or use an app to record your progress. For example, track how much you run, walk, or lift and the calories you burn.
- 8. Celebrate:** It takes weeks to see real changes. Even a pound of weight loss or a pound of muscle gain is a reason to reward yourself. Go out with friends or treat yourself to a new pair of jeans.

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