

This article is from the monthly newsletter of the 24/7 X-Press Fitness Center located in Des Moines, Iowa. This is from the September 2009 issue.

Staying on Track with your Exercise Program

One of the most common comments I hear is "I just can't find the time to exercise". I'm not surprised. If you are trying to 'find' time, you most likely won't. However, you will be much more successful if you change the word 'find' to the word 'make'. *Make* time to exercise, just like you make time to eat, sleep, do chores, and go to work. Here are some tips for keeping your exercise program a priority in your life.

Make time to exercise: I don't know many people who don't lead busy lives. Almost all of us can't seem to fit it all in. If you put exercise on the optional list of things you need to do, chances are very good that it won't happen. It's too easy to justify pushing your exercise aside because more urgent things come along. Notice that I said 'urgent', but I didn't say 'important'. It's difficult to imagine that anything can be much more important than your health. Very few things you do can give you as much bang for the time as when you are exercising. So why treat it as an optional activity? You make time for your other important activities, you should for your health and fitness as well. One way to make time for exercise is to set aside certain times each week for you to exercise. Figure out which time of day and which days of the week will work best, and schedule yourself an appointment. If you keep a personal calendar, go ahead and block these times out for yourself. It will be easier to say no to other commitments if you have your own time set aside. Early mornings work well if you are a morning person. There are very few meetings or other interruptions that come up early in the morning. Plus, if you take care of your exercise first thing, you don't have to worry about fitting it in later. If you can't exercise in the morning, then try to do it right after work. It often works best if you come right to the fitness center after work instead of going home first. I don't know about you, but I find it a lot more difficult to get my workout in if I go home. Too many distractions, like the couch! Come straight here and get your workout in, then go home and relax. If that just doesn't work for you, you may need to exercise in the evenings. This is more challenging because you are more likely to be tired and have less will-power. But there is nothing wrong with exercising at the end of the day, although it may take you a longer to get to sleep if you exercise really late.

Make exercise a habit: Granted it is very easy to get out of the habit of exercising. One day leads to a week and before you know it, you haven't exercised for 2-3 weeks. Believe it or not, exercising is actually habit forming. If you exercise regularly, two things happen. You get used to this routine and you almost automatically fit in your workout because it's just something you expect yourself to do. Also, the more regularly you exercise, the more you miss it when you don't. Part of this is in your head – you may feel guilty if you miss one of your regular sessions, but it is also physical. Your body gets used to whatever you do to it. If you get lazy, it will adapt to that. If you workout regularly, it gets used to that and expects it, and when you don't, you actually miss doing it. So try to get on a regular routine and keep on it. It will help you stay on track with your exercise program.

Find exercise that you enjoy: For some people, the words 'enjoy' and 'exercise' just don't seem to go well together. While some love the feeling of exercising and pushing their bodies, there are others who simply don't enjoy it. One of the keys to success in staying on an exercise program for any length of time is to find activities you can tolerate, if not outright enjoy. Think about what you enjoy doing. If you can tolerate walking, do that. You can walk on treadmills, you don't have to run on them. If you would prefer to ride a bike, do that. Find something that is easiest for you to do if you are struggling to motivate yourself to exercise. If you have never tried the elliptical machines, you should give them a try. You might find that they are more enjoyable for you than the treadmills.

Monitor your fitness: A great motivator for keeping you exercising is by tracking your progress. Progress can be measured in a number of ways: weight, % body fat, the way your clothes fit, better sleep, improved energy levels, how long or how fast you can walk/run, etc. Once you begin to make progress you will become more motivated to keep working to avoid slipping back to where you were, and to continue to make further progress.

Find an exercise partner: If you have trouble getting yourself to the gym regularly, find a friend or family member who is willing to go with you. Making a commitment to someone else is a lot more motivating than making it to yourself. You are much less likely to bail out on a friend who expects to meet you here than if your only appointment is with yourself. Give your friend permission to give you a hard time if you

miss a session, and you can do the same for your friend. This will really separate those times when you can't make your workout appointment from those where you just don't feel like it.

Commit to your health: Because exercise is so beneficial to you in so many ways, make a personal commitment to treat yourself right. Think of your workout time as your own 'play time', your sacred time where you are going to work on your own health and well-being. If you want to feel good, be fit, be sick less often, sleep better and live healthier, then you need to do some activity. Your body was designed to move. Don't mistreat it by allowing it to sit or lay around all the time. In the long run, you will be glad you kept active and healthy.

I wish you much Health, Happiness and Prosperity. But without Health, you can't have the other two.

Quick Fit Tip of the Month: Did you know that a pound of muscle burns six times more calories than a pound of fat? If you include some weight training in your exercise routine, you will build muscle and increase your metabolism, which can help you burn off excess fat.

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