

Getting Active

Being physically active is the most important thing you can do for your health. It can also be one of the most enjoyable things you do for yourself! Here are tips to make physical activity the **highlight** of your day.

Exercise only when you want to

It is very important not to exercise until **you** really want to. If you feel “forced”, you will most likely not continue regularly. Remember, it is okay to:

- Give yourself permission not to exercise.
- Choose not to do regular physical activity for now.
- Make this choice, even though you know that there are consequences if you don't exercise regularly.

This mind set will help relieve some of the guilt associated with not exercising. Abandoning the guilt helps you see that you can choose to move or not. Recognizing the power of choice can be the beginning of enjoyable physical activity.

Call it “movement” instead

Change the word “exercise” to “movement” in your self-talk. Think of the goal of “exercise” as **moving your body on a regular basis**. Using the word movement instead of exercise helps you think more creatively about which activities you might enjoy.

Focus on the non-weight-related benefits of exercise

Exercising only to lose or control your weight will not help you continue for the long-term. Focus on the other benefits of regular movement; you are more likely to “stay with the program”. Some other benefits are: stress reduction, improved self-esteem, feeling better about your body, better health, etc. Pay attention to these rather than the numbers on the scale.

Avoid “all or nothing” thinking

Remember, **something is better than nothing**. If you can't, or don't want to do your workout, then a bicycle ride around the neighborhood is better than doing nothing. If you can't engage in regular movement daily, then every other day is still better than nothing. Be positive about **what you can do** and don't dwell on what you haven't done.

Choose fun, enjoyable activities

Engage in fun, stimulating activities. Step aerobics may not be for you. Try heavy gardening, power walking, martial arts, dancing, swimming, playing with pets or children, going to the park, etc. Make movement part of your regular activities. If you have children, try taking them to the park rather than staying at home. Or go on a family bicycle ride.



Make movement a priority

Saying you don't “have time” to exercise is not an accurate statement. A more accurate statement is: “I have chosen to spend my time doing other things.” Granted, some of your choices may not be easy ones, especially if you are working long hours, enrolled in school, have family commitments, etc. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that you have made choices about your time and what is important to you. When something is important, most people make time for it.

Try to move early in the day

People who move in the morning, before beginning their daily activities, are more likely to stick with their exercise routine. At 6 or 7 am, there are less distractions to get in the way! Note the benefits of exercising first thing in the morning: quiet time for yourself, getting it out of the way, nice way to start the day, energy-booster, etc.

Dress the Part

- If you plan to exercise at a certain time, change into your exercise clothes as far ahead as possible. This affirms the fact that you will do it. If your workout is first thing in the morning, lay your clothes out the night before. Put your shoes right by the bed. “**Dressing the part**” helps you not change your mind about your exercise plans.

Decide to do something; then do it

Even if you've been very inactive, resolve to do something. A walk around the block after dinner is a good beginning. Build on your successes in small incremental steps. For example, walk a little farther each week. Enjoy the good feelings you get when you move your body on a regular basis.