

## **Motivate yourself: How to push yourself to stay fit**

Some people struggle physically with exercise, while some find their bodies react badly to their attempts to eat healthily. However, one of the major barriers to good health is not physical, but mental. In other words, it's just so hard to get motivated to keep fit sometimes!

This is common, especially when it comes to exercise. Given the choice between going to the gym or watching Netflix on the sofa, most people would probably choose the latter nine times out of ten. This is especially true when they're just starting out on their good health journey, before exercise becomes something to look forward to.

So if you're struggling to motivate yourself to exercise or eat healthily, what can you do? Well here are some of the ways you can push yourself to get off the sofa and start your fitness journey:

### **Make exercise a side effect**

It's hard to get excited about the gym at first if it's not something you already enjoy. The only reason you're going is to keep fit, which makes it feel like something you have to do, rather than something you want to. That in turn makes it feel like a chore, and this is a trap that many people fall into when they first begin exercising.

One way to get around this is to choose an activity you know you'll enjoy, that just so happens to also be good exercise. This could be five-a-side football for fun, martial arts to learn how to defend yourself, whatever appeals the most to you.

The key is that exercise is just a side effect of these activities. You're not going to your weekly cricket game to stay fit, you're doing it to have a good time with your friends. The fact that it keeps you healthy is a bonus. Of course, you'll undo all your hard work if you overeat at the restaurant afterwards!

### **Mix things up a bit**

Anything can get boring if it's all you do. If you go for the same run every morning, or do the same gym routine three times a week, you will quickly lose motivation. Variety is the spice of life, and this applies to your diet as well as your exercise. Nobody wants the same dull meals each week, after all.

Mixing things up is good for a number of reasons. When it comes to fitness, it means you can avoid boredom, even if all you do is change your running route every week. However, it's also better for you; if you perform the same exercise too often, your body will adapt to it and you won't end up gaining much from it.

While healthy food is often seen as dull or bland, it generally isn't. However, it will be boring without variety. Get into cooking and see what exciting things you can make each day. Challenge yourself to try out a new healthy recipe every week and you'll find your diet a lot easier to bear.

### **Find the right partner**

A lot of people get advice telling them to diet or exercise with somebody else. This can be a great idea; you could end up pushing each other to succeed, helping each other find recipes and exercises you'll enjoy and providing moral support if you feel like giving up and going for a cheeseburger.

However, you need to make sure you're choosing the right person or people to help. Sometimes, if people give up on their diet or fitness plan they might try to encourage others to quit as well. This makes their decision feel

more justified. You need to either make sure you're with people who wouldn't do that or commit to the idea that if they drop out, you'll keep going no matter what.

### **Stop needing to be in the right mood**

Everybody has been in a mood where they really don't feel like going to the gym or making a salad for lunch. However, the key to success is ignoring this. If you only exercise or eat healthily when you're in the mood to, you'll find yourself really struggling to keep fit.

While it's great to be in the right mood for fitness, you need to get rid of the idea that it's necessary. If you force yourself to do it, most of the time you'll find you don't regret it. This is especially true for exercising, as it releases endorphins that will make you feel much better after a workout than before.

Planning is a good way to avoid this kind of mood-based lethargy. Decide at the beginning of each week what you're going to eat, what exercise you're going to do, and when. This way, you can tell yourself that – even if you really can't be bothered – you have to go out for a run, because it's 2pm on a Tuesday and that's what you've planned.