

STAY MOTIVATED

By Victoria Johnson

It's not surprising that people frequently ask me, "Victoria, how can I motivate myself to keep working out?" Maintaining a desire to exercise is probably the most difficult part of shaping up. So to help the workout weary gear up for spring training this year, I've developed a simple five-step game plan for exercise success. It goes like this:

Step 1: Decide. When you make up your mind that you're going to do something, you plant the seed of success in your subconscious mind.

Step 2: Create a Vision. You can't shoot at a target you can't see. So to stay motivated, develop a visual picture of the outcome of your workouts. If you want to lose weight, imagine yourself thinner, happier, and more at home in your new body, If you want to lower your cholesterol, imagine yourself sitting in your doctor's office as he tells you about the dramatic results of your most recent blood test. (I'm currently training for a marathon, so I clipped out a magazine picture of a group of runners crossing the finish line and glued a picture of my face on the face of one of the runners.)

Step 3: Develop a Game Plan. You must decide when you're going to work out (before work, during lunch, after the kids go to bed?), and who you're going to work out with (friend, spouse, coworker, personal trainer?). You also need to determine how you're going to rearrange some of your priorities to put health on the top of your list (get up 30 minutes earlier, put the kids to bed earlier, watch 30 minutes less television, skip happy hour with your friends?). Remember, time invested is time well spent. If you commit to workout for 30 minutes, you'll gain enough energy for two more productive hours.

Step 4: Design a Blueprint. Once you've figured out a plan, design your workout. Be specific. For example: Walk 30 minutes Monday, 6:30 a.m.; lift weights at home on Wednesday, 8 p.m.; calisthenics and tennis on Friday, noon; Sunday, one hour bike ride with the kids.

Remember, your body needs different kinds of activities. Just as a body builder needs to do cardiovascular exercises to stay in shape, a runner also needs to lift weights. And by varying your workout routine, you'll avoid getting bored.

One caution: if you've been sedentary, please see a physician before you begin a strenuous exercise regimen. And regardless of what activities you choose, always be sure to warm up, cool down, and stretch to help avoid injuries.

Step 5: Establish Checkpoints and Celebrate. Every few weeks, evaluate your progress. More than likely you'll have more energy, you'll sleep better, you'll smile more, and your clothes will become roomier. As you shape up, write down your weight, your body-fat percentage, and your new slack size. Put it somewhere where you can see it, and relish your success. Celebrate by taking pride in your accomplishments. Then set new goals and establish new parameters. Feeling good about yourself and having a higher self-esteem is one of the best things you can do for your physical and mental health. So what are you waiting for?

Let's get Busy!