

## The Hardest Part is Getting in the Door

How many times have you told yourself that you really should exercise, but not actually followed through? If you're like many, you've done that a number of times. Others get started – often as a New Year's resolution – but quickly stop working out. Why is it so difficult? Often, it's because we're working out using other peoples' reasons, instead of finding what motivates us.

### Why We're "Supposed" to Work Out

The benefits of exercise are many, and we hear about them often: increased strength and flexibility, better cholesterol profile, more energy, stronger bones, decreased risk of heart disease, among many others. For some, these reasons are powerful enough to keep them motivated long-term. For others, workouts are a continuation of, or preparation for, athletic pursuits. For those people, exercise is a physical outlet, or perhaps a stress reliever. The question remains, however: what if those things don't motivate *you*? How can you get yourself to do – and keep doing – something that is good for you, when you really aren't motivated to do it?

The key is to think about your values. What are the most important things in *your* life? Is work your top priority? If so, exercise can help you keep from getting sick and missing work. It can also raise your energy levels, and thus your productivity. Now, instead of a more abstract motivation, such as more energy or better health, you have something that means a lot to you as your motivation. For someone else, it might be family that is most important. You may wish you had the energy to keep up with your children or grandchildren. Or, you may notice that older family members are not able to do nearly as much as they once did. You may connect the slowdown in activity with a lack of exercise. Again, you now have a motivation that means a great deal more to you – either the incentive to be a more active part of your family's life, or the desire not to see your body break down more quickly than it has to. While it's hard to picture or even notice the loss of muscle and bone on your body, it's easy to visualize someone you know going through that, and thus you can use that mental picture as motivation. It should be becoming obvious now that the key to starting and staying with an exercise program is tapping into your personal values. The most crucial step, then, is to take the time to determine what those values are.

### What if I'm *Still* Not Motivated?

Sometimes, even though we are clear about why we want to exercise, and have very good reasons for doing so, we *still* can't sustain our motivation. This is when working with a personal trainer is often crucial. It's like taking your car to a mechanic when you might not have the time, the desire, or the knowledge to do the work yourself. In such a case, both the time saved and the peace of mind that comes from having the job done right are worth the expense involved.

So why is a trainer so important? He or she will help you to get the best workout possible on any given day. Just having an appointment to exercise with a trainer is enough to keep most people motivated to work out regularly. Your trainer will know which exercises to use, how much weight to use, and when to alter your program. This will help you avoid becoming bored with your workouts. Your trainer will help you reach your set goals and keep you on track. So, while you still may not be overly motivated yourself, you will likely say, as so many do after each and every workout, "I didn't want to work out today, but now that it's over, I'm so glad that I did." More than that, you'll keep moving toward the goals that are important to *you*.

Whatever your motivation, and no matter how many times you may have started and stopped exercising in the past, the rewards are worth trying again. Take the time to think about what you would do if you had more strength and energy, if you were healthier than you are right now. Write those things down, and keep them where you can look at them every day. Then, whether on your own or with the help and guidance of a training professional, make it your first priority to get in the door of the gym. Everything else will be much, much easier – and so, so worth it.