

Tips for Fitness Success - Especially for Beginners

So you've finally made the decision to change how you feel, and also how you feel about your relationship with your body. This is a great starting point! But many of us flounder when it comes to making the master plan - how, exactly, do you go about getting fit and healthy? We know that it will involve changes in diet, exercise, habits and attitudes. But what exactly should you do to get to our goals?

The first thing to acknowledge is that it will take time - nothing will happen overnight, or even in a week. It's taken a while to get you to the point of being unhappy and unhealthy, and real change takes time. So grant yourself patience.

Here are several solid tips to help you shape your healthy future.

1. Write down a list of three bigger fitness goals, such as weight loss, improved flexibility, increased strength. Then under each of these bigger goals, write down a list of three things each to do to get there. For instance, for weight loss, you could commit to meeting with a dietitian for nutritional help, identify the foods that you know aren't good for you, and commit to avoiding them, and increase your fibre intake to at least 40 grams per day.

2. Decide where you will exercise, and how often. This is crucial to your success. A dream of magically being more fit without a plan is just that - only a dream. Take a weekend and check out local gyms, trainers who offer specific types of training, such as outside training, HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training), or out-of-the-box solutions such as small classes held in churches, community centres, or neighbourhood walking groups. Commit to at least three days of one hour of activity each day to start, and, based on where you will be working out, what types of exercise you're choosing.

3. Talk to your friends and find out who else is struggling with the same issues and you may find you've got yourself a fitbuddy! This is someone you can call to

get emotional support, plan to work out, plan meals, and grocery shop together for maximum reinforcement in your goals. You need someone who's got your back, and for whom you can do the same.

4. Consult a personal trainer to get individual, focused training. But do your homework first - check their credentials, ask for names of clients who can report their own experiences with that trainer, and sit down with your choice of trainer to hash out exactly what s/he can do for you, and make sure that the two of you are compatible. If one-on-one training isn't in the budget, ask the trainer to consider two-person or small group training (no more than 4 people). Some trainers will do only one-on-one training, but will agree to meeting a couple times a month instead of once a week.

5. Get the right equipment! No one needs fancy workout clothing, but you absolutely do need excellent shoes. Go to a store dedicated to fitness and tell the clerk exactly what kind of exercise you will be doing. A walking regime will require a different shoe than joining a volleyball league, or doing group ex classes. Keep in mind that you must get new shoes every 8-12 months.

6. Put your workouts on your schedule, and understand that only a dire emergency will allow you to cancel that workout. You may need to change the date or time, but **DO NOT CANCEL**. This is your commitment holding you to account.

7. If weight loss is one of your goals, check your weight **NO MORE OFTEN** than once a week, at the same time of day. No meaningful change will happen during a single day. Checking more often only means you're reinforcing anxiety and negative self-talk. These are toxic ingredients that have no place in your plan to get healthy.

8. Avoid conversations with people who like to criticize and demean others. You

will probably never get their approval, and really, so what? YOUR approval of yourself is the only benchmark that matters.

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