

get fit



WHAT HURDLE?

When you recognize the issues that are stopping you, you'll be in control and able to overcome them.

Leap over any rut In the pursuit of sculpted legs, faster miles, or heavier reps, sometimes the most Herculean effort you face is simply lacing up. No more letting those mental roadblocks hold you back. Find out how to think your way fit. **By SARA ANGLE** →

Low on motivation to move? When you find yourself regularly skipping or slacking off on your workouts, there's usually something deeper going on than just a lack of energy. As the hosts of ABC's *Extreme Weight Loss*, trainers Chris and Heidi Powell know well the psychological obstacles that many people get hung up on. "If the mental side of getting in shape is not addressed, then most of us see the effort as a chore and, inevitably, we quit," says Chris, whose new diet and exercise book, *Extreme Transformation*, coauthored with Heidi, explores the emotional component of sticking to a routine. Here, the surprising reasons that could be behind why you bail or fail—and how to turn your mind on to exercise again.

You need a simple endgame

Beware of viewing health and fitness as something with an end date—like losing 10 pounds or competing in a race—instead of as a lifestyle, Heidi says. "Otherwise, once you reach the 'finish line,' you'll be much more likely to slip back into old habits." Think this could be you? Start teeing up small, easily achievable goals to keep your momentum going, says Michele Kerulis, a clinical lecturer in counseling at Northwestern University.

Make sure they're short term and not based on your appearance—for instance, taking a dance class, lifting weights twice a week, or learning an activity like indoor rock climbing. "These new targets will keep you driven after you've reached your long-term goal," Kerulis says. Did that 10K? Go faster next time. Develop a cycle of raising the bar and you'll not only build confidence but also rediscover your love of exercise, the most powerful driver of all.

Your gym schedule should be less negotiable

Agreeing to every commitment that comes your way may make you look like a superstar to your boss, your friends, and your spouse, but it also means less time for yourself, Heidi explains. And when you're experiencing that squeeze, you're more likely to skip workouts. You know you need to carve out time for yourself, so instead of feeling sheepish about devoting a big chunk to your barre class, "take pride in telling people that your workout is a priority in your life," Kerulis advises. "Think about the many roles that you have—partner, mother, daughter, friend, and employee. You'll be better able to do them all if you're physically healthy and mentally clear." Make your workout a standing appointment in your day planner or Outlook calendar, rather than leave a blank space you could be persuaded to fill with some other to-do.

Your friends don't share the exercise vibe

Not all your friends and family may be as fitness-minded as you, but instead of letting socializing lure you from your daily sweat, harness it as a way to sweeten the workout pot for yourself, Chris says. Suggest subbing Spinning class for happy hour, or make date night about shooting hoops and cooking dinner instead of eating out. And if exercise doesn't hold appeal for your inner circle, then look for backup elsewhere, Kerulis says. Become workout buddies with other regulars at the gym, or hitch onto group rides or runs at the local bike shop or running store. The pull of fun company can keep you motivated, even if they're not your BFFs. →



Stay the course—
chase the next
body goal ahead.

You need more cheering on

Think of your brain as a personal trainer in your head. You rely on that voice to have a you've-got-this attitude when your workout gets tough or when you plateau on the way to a fitness goal. But if a bad day or lingering stress has filled your head with downer thoughts that make you want to quit, you can change the conversation and head off a slump, Chris says. To restructure negative thinking into positive statements, visualize a big red "Stop" sign when you have a self-sabotaging notion, Kerulis recommends. Then think about how you can reframe the thought so that "I can't do this new exercise, it's too hard" suddenly becomes "This new exercise is hard, but learning a new exercise will make me stronger, and soon it will be easy."

You've got to assume a fit identity

"When you see yourself as a winner or an athlete, that's who you'll become," Heidi says. "And you will choose actions that support that belief, such as sticking to a workout schedule instead of hitting 'Snooze.'" If you want to be a runner and you plan to put in time on the treadmill, repeat after us: "I am now an endurance athlete in training." You'll be amazed what that little identity shift can do for your attitude toward exercise. "A runner doesn't skip runs," Heidi says. "That's who you are and what you do." So go ahead, be a ninja in kickboxing, a Navy SEAL in boot camp, or a professional dancer in Zumba class. In other words, give yourself some props and you're halfway there. ★

