Exercise for Beginners: Making Exercise a Habit

Moving from not exercising to exercising consistently is a big change. It's important to plan accordingly and take steps to help you succeed. It's going to take effort, but the results are worth it.

Set a Specific Intention

Plan your workouts. Be specific! "I will walk" isn't enough. Say, "I will walk for 5 minutes around the block on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning at 7 am." Get a notebook just for exercise and write it down. Writing down your intentions has been proven to increase your odds of actually doing what you planned.

Start Super Small

Trying to do too much is a common beginner mistake. This isn't sustainable - and often leads to giving up or even getting injured. In order to make exercise a habit, start with manageable tasks. That may mean doing only five minutes of exercise, or just getting dressed and lacing up your sneakers. There, you did it!

Develop a Ritual

Rituals are important cues that signal our brain (and body) that it's time for something. An example of a pre-workout ritual might be listening to a playlist of your favorite music, having a cup of coffee, drinking a full glass of water, or even checking emails / social media.

Focus on the Process

Exercise takes time to see results. Focus on building the habit first. Constantly asking, "Are we there yet?" is going to make for a frustrating experience.

Set Measurable Goals

Setting small goals can help you see the progress you are making. Can you walk for 10 minutes? Run one mile? Do five push-ups? These should be small goals to work towards. Set one goal at a time, and once that goal is complete, set a new one.

Track Your Progress

This goes without saying, but your plans, intentions and goals shouldn't be stored in your head. Get a journal, or a phone app. Log your exercise plan and your workouts. This will help to both hold you accountable and to motivate you when you see how far you've come.

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