

Moving Beyond Roadblocks



You want to exercise regularly, but you keep encountering roadblocks—those persuasive excuses you come up with for not sticking to your plan. To make exercise part of your life, you need to identify your roadblocks and find ways to move beyond them. Sherri McMillan, MSc, co-owner of Northwest Personal Training & Fitness Education in Vancouver, Washington, and 1998 IDEA Personal Trainer of the Year, offers some help:

Excuse #1: *I Don't Have Enough Time.* A *perceived* lack of time is a common excuse for not exercising. When life gets hectic, exercise is usually the first thing to go. It's easy to convince yourself that the morning jog can wait until lunchtime or after dinner, and then tomorrow!

Solution. Commitments, responsibilities and the demands of work, family and social life are always going to be there. You can choose to prioritize exercise now—or you can wait until you are forced to make it a priority. Unless you take care of yourself today, one day you may find yourself unable to take care of your business, family or any of your other interests. Research has shown that people who exercise are not only healthier but more productive. Even just 10 to 30 minutes a day of exercise, if done consistently, can provide health benefits. How about scheduling 30-minute appointments with yourself in your day planner?

Excuse #2: *I Have No Energy.* When you have had a long day at work, it's tempting to want to go home, sit down on the couch and “zone out” in front of the television.

Solution. Schedule your workout for a different time. Get up 45 minutes earlier and go for a walk. Or keep your fitness gear in the car and go straight to the gym on the way home. It may be a good idea to schedule workouts with a friend—you won't want to disappoint your buddy by not showing up. Know, too, that exercise *gives* you more energy!

Excuse #3: *I Hate Exercise.* Exercise can seem like a chore if the activity you've chosen doesn't appeal to you.

Solution. If you can discover a type of exercise you enjoy and stick to it, eventually you will find you need exercise—physically and mentally. What activities have you tried? Do you like hiking or walking with friends? Do you ever use headphones and listen to music while you work out?

Excuse #4: *I Can't See Any Results.* You've been exercising religiously for five weeks and you haven't lost any weight. You give up because you're frustrated.

Solution. Stay off the scale! Weight is not an accurate way of measuring your progress. Think about the progress you *have* made. Maybe you can walk 20 minutes longer or lift heavier weights than you could in the beginning. You *are* making progress, even though you may not see it on the scale.

Excuse #5: *I'll Never Be Perfect.* You have an all-or-nothing attitude. You think it's not worth exercising because your body will never be perfect. Or you plan to work out for an hour and when something comes up that keeps you from getting to the gym for that amount of time, you skip the workout.

Solution. When it comes to exercise, any activity is better than none. Sometimes, striving for perfection is what leads to failure. Focus on how your body feels, not how it looks. The trick in trying to stick to a long-term plan is learning to compromise. If you don't have a full hour, just go for 30 minutes, or even 15.

Excuse #6: *I Feel Deprived.* The chocolate cake staring you in the face is too great a temptation to resist in exchange for potential weight loss down the road. You eat three pieces and feel too bloated to exercise. You feel deprived if you have to resist high-fat foods or give up other activities to fit exercise into your schedule.

Solution. Imagine that each time you work out or refrain from overeating, you are not depriving yourself, but actually giving yourself something—spiritually, emotionally and physically.

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