

Overcoming Exercise Barriers

If you are less active than you would like to be right now, it's most likely because things always seem to be getting in the way. Everyone encounters what we call exercise barriers, and they can be both internal (e.g., you're tired or bored) and external (e.g., schedule conflicts, bad weather). Trying to balance work, family, and other responsibilities presents barriers which may seem insurmountable at times. When you do have a spare moment, all you want to do is relax. Here are a few examples of common exercise barriers – do any of these sound familiar to you?



So, where do you start? The critical first step is deciding there is no such thing as an insurmountable barrier. For every obstacle you encounter, the key is to have a strategy for overcoming it. This plan of action will be much more effective if you anticipate your barriers and have strategies in place before you encounter them.

Adding anything else to your to-do list can seem overwhelming at times, and you are not alone in feeling this way! The good news is, each time you successfully cope with an exercise barrier and follow through with your plan, you will feel more confident that you will be able to do it again in the future. Here are some ideas from others – how are they fitting exercise in?

I have tennis shoes and a set of hand weights in the file cabinet in my office at work, so I try to get at least one 10-minute burst of activity in each day. At first my co-workers thought I was a little nuts, but now a couple of them will join me a few times a week!



I am so much better at exercising consistently when I have a specific program I've signed up for. I'll sign up for a morning workout class at the park district, and I'm NOT a morning person, but I'll go to the class, because I've paid for it, I know it's going to be on these days at this time, and I can go and do it and be done for the day.



A lot of magazines have a section that includes new exercises to try. I tear them out and keep them all in a binder, then every evening after I get home from work, I pull one out and do it. They usually only take 10-15 minutes and the variety keeps me from getting bored.

My goal is to jog for 30 minutes 3 times per week. I've realized the best time to do this is early in the morning before my kids wake up, but if I don't plan to wake up early on a given day, it won't happen. So every Sunday night I look at the calendar and decide which three mornings will work best that week. For some reason, just knowing it's on the calendar gives me the motivation I need to get out of bed when the alarm goes off.



I used to have a 30 minute commute by car to work every day. I recently got a new job and while I was looking for a new apartment, I tried to find one within a reasonable walking distance to work. Now, I walk or ride my bike to work most days. It's been a great and easy way to fit a little activity into my schedule and it gives me time to wind down at the end of the day.

Now, think about your exercise barriers. What are the things that tend to get in the way of your exercise plans?

Once you've identified your barriers, come up with at least one strategy for overcoming each of them. Remember to consider your own unique circumstances and come up with strategies that will work for *you*!

| My goal | Exercise barrier | Strategy to overcome barrier |
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| <p>Example: <i>To walk/jog for 30 minutes 3 evenings per week after the baby goes to bed</i></p> | <p><i>It's raining or too hot outside</i></p> | <p><i>I will do a 30-minute cardio DVD at home instead.</i></p> |
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