

Exercise your options

Stay motivated with new routines, realistic goals

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At the end of a good workout it's one thing to feel the burn. It's another thing altogether to feel burned out. By now many New Year's resolvers are feeling somewhat less enthused about exercise than they did, say, on Jan. 2.

What to do?

Recharge your energy and interest by first restating your goals, says Bobbi Dunn, fitness specialist at St. Luke's Hospital's Center for Health Enhancement.

"Many people become discouraged with a new exercise regimen because they feel like they're not making enough progress toward their goals," Dunn says, "when, in fact, they've actually set their goals unrealistically high. It's better to set more modest short-term goals that can be achieved than to set an ambitious long-term goal that seems to take forever to reach."

Dunn has these suggestions for revving up your commitment to your fitness program:

- **Make sure your goals are *your* goals.** "Lots of people start exercising because a spouse or other person has told them they need to lose weight," Dunn says. "But you'll only stick with it if it's your *own* goal, if it's something you're committed to."
- **Set specific short-term goals.** "It's better to say, 'I'm going to go to the gym three days a week for the next three weeks,' than to say 'I'm going to lose 30 pounds in the next three months,' " Dunn says. "It's easier to see progress toward a short-term goal, and it's not as intimidating."

Dunn recommends stating your goals in specific language. For example: "Lose 2 pounds in two weeks." This helps you keep track of your progress.

"It may also help keep you motivated to set your sights on specific training challenges," Dunn suggests. "For example, you may want to train for an upcoming 5K race or other event."

■ **Keep an exercise log.** By recording your exercise and you can see yourself becoming more fit, explains Dunn. “Even if you haven’t lost as much weight as you’d like at the end of, say, six weeks, if you’ve been recording your workout information you might see that when you started you could only do two sets with 10 pounds, but now you’re doing three sets with 15 pounds. Or maybe you’ll see that you’re walking three miles at 15 minutes per mile, where you started at two miles at 20 minutes per mile. That’s success. And that’ll keep you motivated.”

■ **Don’t give in to the “all or nothing” mentality.** “Some people will miss a day or two at the gym, and then just skip the rest of the week because they’ve told themselves ‘Well, this week is a bust anyway.’ But then it’s even harder to get back on track,” Dunn says. “If you miss a day or two, start making plans right away for getting back to your routine on a specific day.”

■ **Mix it up.** “If you’ve been getting your aerobic workout by running, consider changing to an elliptical trainer for a while,” Dunn says. “If you’ve been doing a specific weight-lifting routine, change the exercises in the routine. If you’ve been working out indoors, try it outside for a while. If you’ve been exercising alone, join a group.

“Even more fun is to try something way out of the ordinary, like taking a rock climbing class or signing up for a team sport. These will help you achieve your fitness goals, too. But for some people these are a lot more fun.”

■ **Buy some toys.** Dunn says that adding exercise accessories can sometimes spice up a dull routine. These might include an MP3 player, a pedometer, a heart monitor/watch or a new pair of shoes.

■ **Reward yourself.** “It’s important to acknowledge progress toward your goals,” Dunn says. “For example, tell yourself that if you go to the gym 12 times in the next three weeks you’ll treat yourself to a massage. Just make sure the reward is something like a massage and not a milkshake.”