

GET A NEW Fitness Attitude

If you're bored with your exercise routine or want to start a fitness program but don't know where to begin, here's how to shape up your psyche.

You've been doing the same old tired gym routine for months.

You've fallen off the fitness wagon due to injury or a hectic work schedule and want to get back in the swing. You've been exercising regularly but can't muster the enthusiasm to increase your workout's intensity so you'll progress.

Sound familiar? If so, it's time for a motivation makeover. Enter Laurie Bagley, an online fitness coach in Weed, Calif., who climbed to the top of Mount Everest in 2006. "I trained hard for Everest, but I also took small steps along the way that prepared me for the opportunity," she says.

The following strategies can inspire anyone to maintain fitness motivation—whether you're an elite athlete or a couch potato trying to get into shape.

Personalize Your Goal

If you're starting a new workout routine or want to jump-start an old one, begin by identifying a highly motivating objective.

"Your goal doesn't have to be huge, but it has to be specific," says Bagley.

For example, make it your mission to participate in an upcoming fitness event in your community that you'll need to train for, such as

a walk-a-thon, a 10K road race, or a century (a 100-mile bicycle ride).

"Fitness events are motivating because you know you have to show up somewhere, other people are going to be there, and maybe you even have to pay an entry fee," says Bagley. "It's encouraging and inspiring to take on a significant goal and have other people present while that's taking place."

Commit to an Hour a Day

Most people can get themselves in decent shape by exercising for an hour five days a week with two days off for rest, says Bagley. Sound like a lot?

"If you're committed to your goal, you can find a way to fit in an hour's worth of exercise, no matter how busy you are," she says. The key is to make time by blocking out exercise increments in your day planner, just as you would a business meeting.

Still, kids will get sick and crises will arise, in which case you'll need an exercise plan B.

"Maybe you can't get to the gym like you planned, but that doesn't mean you can't take a power walk on your lunch hour," says Bagley.

Work Your Way Up

If you're starting from scratch and your goal is to compete in a 10K race in six months, work up to an hour of daily exercise by starting with 30 minutes of cardio, such as walking, jogging, cycling, or swimming. Then add five minutes per week to your daily routine until you're up to an hour.

Join with Others

Make yourself accountable to someone, such as a personal trainer, a friend, your spouse, or even your children.

"You don't want your fitness goal to be a secret," says Bagley. "If no one else knows about it, it's easier to slide back into old behavior."

If you're training with others, develop a solo strategy for when the group can't meet, she advises.

Plan to Backslide

Until you've been consistent for three months with your exercise plan, you can bet that old patterns will creep back into your schedule, and you'll sometimes want to skip a workout.

What to do? Remember you're entitled to two days off each week.

"Most people can get to their fitness goals, even big ones," says Bagley. "As long as they're willing to train just five days a week."

If you're committed to your goal, you can find a way to fit in an hour's worth of exercise, no matter how busy you are.

□ Sandra Gordon spoke with Laurie Bagley, an online fitness coach, Everest speaker, and adventure travel planner in Weed, Calif. For more information, visit www.lauriebagley.com.