

# FROM COUCH POTATO TO FIT & HEALTHY

*How to Get Moving, Get Fit  
& Enjoy the Process*

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## Introduction

### **How many times have you thought, “I should exercise”?**

Yet you're tired, maybe you're really out of shape, and the idea of exercising seems so overwhelming that it's just easier to push the idea of exercise from your mind. Deep down you know that you'll feel better, look better, and live a better and healthier life if you just get started.

That's what this eBook is designed to do. It's designed to help you leave your sedentary lifestyle behind. And it's not filled with huge promises and goals that you'll give up on. Instead, this guide puts you in charge of how you move forward. We stress the idea of small steps so that you create a pattern of success. It boosts confidence and helps you make exercise part of your lifestyle.

There's no shame in living a sedentary lifestyle. Millions of people are living this way. It's the result of a hectic life that leaves you feeling exhausted at the end of the day. It's the result of not really finding an exercise program that feels manageable or even fun.

### **That's all about to change.**

In this eBook, you'll transition from your currently sedentary lifestyle to a lifestyle where you're focused on doing something terrific for your body and your health every day. This eBook is divided into nine steps or sections. Each section leads you through the process of getting off the couch and exercising in a way that makes you feel proud, energized, and that provides results.

Use this guide, be honest with yourself, and work through each step to create an exercise program that you can integrate into your lifestyle.

Ready? You can do it, let's get started!



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## Step #1 Setting Your Exercise Goals

The goal initially is to get you off the couch and exercising on a daily basis. However, if you're motivated by numbers or events, then something tangible can help. For example, you might decide to set a goal of:

- Exercising for 20 minutes a day
- Losing 3 pounds a week
- Running a 5K
- Reducing your blood pressure, cholesterol, or A1C blood sugar levels

You might have less tangible or measurable goals as well. For example:

- Looking good in a swimsuit
- Having more energy
- Feeling confident in the gym

Stop right now and think about what you want to gain from exercising. You don't have to write down any goals just yet. Just start thinking about what your goals might be and how you're motivated.

We're going to talk about how to achieve exercise goals throughout this eBook and focus specifically on them in step seven. For now, just start getting an idea about what you might want to achieve. We'll figure out how you're going to achieve it as we work through the steps together.

### Measurable Goals and Why They Matter

Are you familiar with the concept of SMART goals? These are goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound.

Here's an example of the average goal a person sets – *"I want to run a marathon."*

Great. That's a good goal. Running a marathon may be the perfect incentive to get you off the couch and onto the trails or pavement and exercising. However, it's a pretty vague goal and it makes it difficult to measure, track, and plan for.

Something better might be to say, *"I want to complete a marathon in nine months."* This makes it a little bit more time bound, and because we know that a marathon is 26.2 miles now the goal is becoming more specific and measurable. Is it attainable? That depends on the person.

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There's a difference between saying "*I want to complete a marathon*" and "*I want to run a marathon.*" There's no pace or finish time in the goal so yes, it's achievable. Let's take a look at another example of a typical goal.

*"I want to start exercising."*

Okay, when are you going to start exercising, and how long are you going to exercise for? This goal is very vague and it's one of the most common goals that people set.

How about, "*I'm going to exercise for ten minutes every day*"?

Or "*I'm going to walk for ten minutes every day for six months and I'm starting today.*"

That is measurable, achievable, and pretty specific. It's also time bound.

So, you're getting the idea. The goals that you set will be easier to measure, and to achieve, if you build in some specifics, deadlines, and parameters that are easy to track.

Start thinking about what you might want to do and how you might write that goal and let's move onto the second step, which is finding your motivation.



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## Step #2 Finding YOUR Motivation

Why do you want to start exercising and what is going to get you off the couch and onto your feet each and every day?

If you don't know why you're exercising and you don't have a motivation or a reason that really connects with who you are, then it's not going to work. It's darned near impossible to make something part of your life and to make big changes to your lifestyle without a motivating reason.

If you're serious about becoming more active and living a happier, healthier, and better life (and quitting the sedentary lifestyle), then it's imperative that you find your motivation.

Here are a few examples of different types of motivation.

### Accountability

Some people find it easier to get and stay motivated when they're accountable to someone else. For example, if you and your friends create an exercise club and you begin meeting every day to work out together (and motivate one another), then you're accountable to someone else.

Accountability might also happen when you're motivated to get healthy so that you are around to take care of your children or someone that you love.

### Event/Competition

Other people are motivated by the idea of an event. Training or exercising for an event taps into their competitive side and gets them off the couch and out the door.

An event can be anything from a 5K race to a mixed martial arts competition to a dance marathon. There are so many different types of exercise and physical activity to consider.



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## **Data and Hard Numbers**

You might be one of those people who is motivated by numbers. You might enjoy tracking your data and improving on those numbers every day. For example, you might time yourself to see how many squats you can do in a minute. Maybe you do 15 in a minute and tomorrow you push yourself to do 16 because you're motivated by the data and trying to improve on your performance.

## **Rewards**

If you're motivated by material rewards, leverage that aspect of your personality. For every goal you achieve, buy yourself something nice or treat yourself. For example, you might reward yourself with a massage for every 30 days in a row of exercise.

## **Vanity**

There's no shame in wanting to look better. Take a photo of yourself now and create a system where you take a photo of yourself every 30 days. As you exercise each day think about that upcoming photo. As the weeks and months go by, you'll start seeing a change in your body and that is motivating. It can be really fun to see your hard work pay off.

## **Because It's on Your Schedule**

Some lucky folks are motivated to complete a task simply because it's on their calendar. If that's you, then put exercise on your calendar right now. Get up fifteen minutes earlier or find a nugget of time during your day and schedule exercise.

## **Money**

JoAnne pays a hefty amount to be a member at her local gym. To justify that expense, she decided that she had to hit the gym 25 times each month to make the expense worth it.

She's motivated by money and doesn't want to waste hers. She knows that she has to go to the gym six days a week to reach her goal of 25 times a month, and it gets her out the door and into the gym every month.

There are probably other things that motivate people, but this is a pretty good start. Did any of these methods resonate with you? Think back to other goals that you have achieved. Why did you achieve them? What motivated you? This can give you a clue about your motivation style or personality and help you integrate exercise into your daily life.

If you're not sure what motivates you, that's okay. As you begin your new exercise program you'll start to see patterns. Become aware of those patterns and you'll learn your motivation personality.



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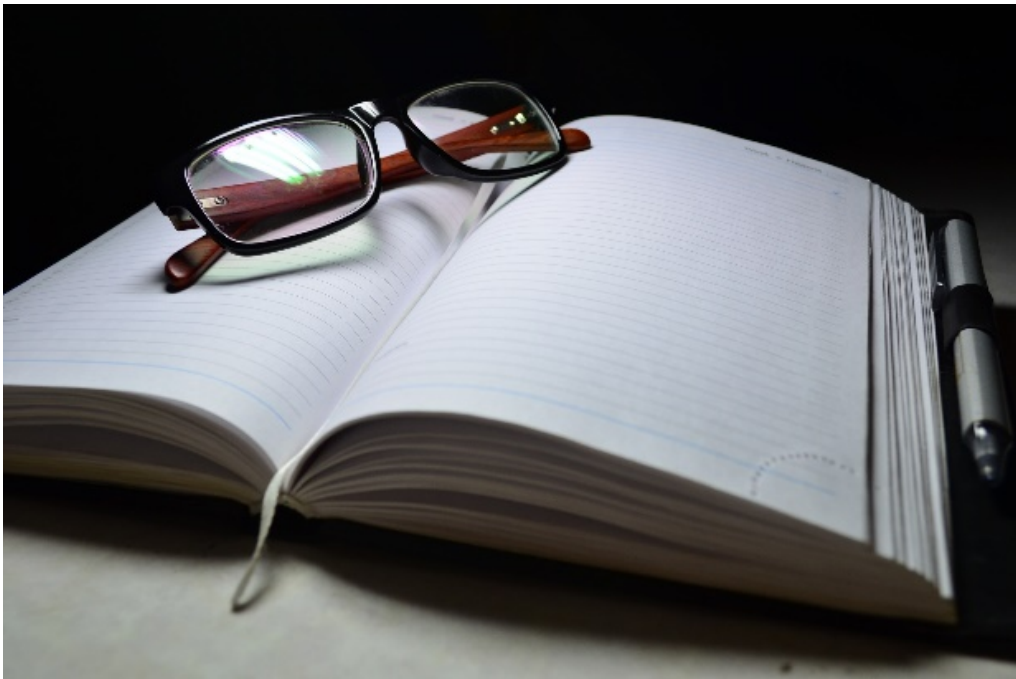
## Step #3 Tracking Your Success

One way to become more aware of your personality and your patterns, and to help you stay accountable to your goals, is to track your exercise and fitness success. Many goal-setting experts, coaches, and motivational teachers strongly emphasize tracking your success. It gives you valuable insight and can be both cathartic and informative.

There are a few different ways that you can track your success. You can embrace all of them, some of them, or create your own.

- **Selfies** – We've already talked about taking photos of yourself and your progress. Sometimes it's difficult to see what you've accomplished, but photos don't lie and they can be very motivational. If you choose to take selfies, make sure that you photograph yourself in the same clothing and at the same angle each time. It's easier to see your progress this way.
- **Diary/journal** – A journal or fitness diary is another option. This one helps you get all of your feelings around your body, your lifestyle, and your new exercise program down on paper. If you're having a difficult day, you can vent. If you're struggling, you can work through it on paper.

And if you're having a good day and enjoying success, celebrate it. Journaling helps you get thoughts, especially the negative ones, out of your mind so you can focus on being positive and doing what you need to do.



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- **Fitness tracker** – Another tool that you can use is a fitness tracker. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of applications and tools that you can use to track your fitness. They count everything from steps taken and calories burned to minutes of exercise and intensity.

You can enter the information yourself online using something like MyFitnessPal, or you can clip a pedometer or Fitbit type device onto your clothing and let technology do the work. Keep in mind that simply gathering the information isn't enough, you have to look at it and learn from it.

For example, if you walked 7,000 steps today and your goal was 10,000, why did you fall short and what can you do differently tomorrow? Or if you walked 12,000 steps today, what helped you get those extra 2,000 steps in and how can you repeat that success?

Tracking your exercise and documenting the process is important. It helps you embrace your successes. It provides you with valuable insight and information to make positive changes if you're struggling, and it helps you deal with the emotions and challenges of transitioning from a sedentary lifestyle to a more active one.

## Step #4 Managing Failure

Okay, here's the harsh truth that you have to hear and you have to embrace.

There will be bad days. There will be days where you fail. There will be days when you feel like quitting and you do quit. There will be days where maybe you feel so terrible that you just can't get into the gym and face the public.

You may feel badly about your fitness, about your body, or about yourself, period. You have to learn how to manage those days. They're going to happen. They happen to everyone. So let's explore ideas and tips to manage the sucky days and to come out fine on the other side.

### **It's not all or nothing.**

If you make a mistake today, tomorrow is a fresh start. It's that old, "Get back on the horse" mentality. You don't have to be perfect every day. You simply have to keep trying.

### **Ask yourself why.**

Why did you fail? What happened and how can you avoid that experience next time? What can you do differently? This is where a diary or a journal may be helpful. Reflect on what works for you when you're successful and what hinders your success.

### **Shift your self-talk.**

Sometimes we fail because we're not loving ourselves. It may sound a bit silly right now, but how you talk to yourself really matters. For example, if you're sitting in your car outside of the gym and you're feeling ashamed of your fitness or your body, pay attention to the words that are running through your mind and change them.

### **No Motivation**

Simple phrases like "*I am worth this effort*" or "*I am proud,*" "*I am a fighter,*" "*Everyone starts somewhere, this is where I am today and I honor that*" can help you find your motivation and to move past your fears and shame.

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### **Find a mentor.**

You don't have to hire a mentor or a coach; you can find someone in the media or someone that you know who achieved success. When you're having a difficult day, remember that this person achieved success, and you can too.

### **Hire a coach (or call a good friend).**

Find someone who can talk you through the bad times. If you're sitting on the couch and you just can't get out the door to go for that run or to take that dance class, then call or text your coach or friend. Tell them you need a push. It's okay to ask for help.

### **Don't let one bad day turn into dozens.**

The snowball effect works two ways. You can leverage momentum and turn repeated successes into huge results. Or you can let repeated mistakes turn into a failed experience. If you have a bad day, let it only be one day.

### **Finally, remember what you like about yourself and your body.**

Make a list, create an affirmation, or give yourself a daily pep talk. Find things that you love about yourself and embrace them. Let go of the things that you don't like about yourself. Focus on the positive.



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## Step #5 Overcoming Fear

One of the biggest reasons that sedentary folks stay that way (and one of the biggest reasons why people in general don't pursue their goals and dreams) is fear.

Fear stops most people dead in their tracks and keeps you from doing what you want to do. Fear stinks! There's really no point to fear – unless your life is in danger – and yet it keeps people from living their best lives.

It may be keeping you from living your best life too. So what do we do about it? How do you overcome your fears and start exercising? Well, the first step is to identify your fears.

### What Are You Afraid Of?

There are many fears that may be looming in your mind. You may be:

- Afraid of failure
- Afraid that it's going to be uncomfortable or hard work
- Afraid that you're going to be laughed at
- Afraid that you'll feel like a novice or that you don't know what you're doing
- Afraid of success (seriously, this is a common fear)

They're all valid fears, but that doesn't mean you have to let them stop you.

Identify your fear. Say it out loud. *"I am afraid that I'll be laughed at."*

Saying your fear out loud gets it out of your mind where it can spin out of control and take over your actions.

Assess the scenarios. What's the worst that could happen? What if someone did laugh at you? What would that do to you; how would you feel? Now assess the best-case scenario. You go into the gym, you get a good workout, you feel good about yourself and you take one solid step toward your goals.

Is it worth facing the worst-case scenario? Probably, right?

## What Else Can You Do To Move Around Or Through Your Fears?

Get started at home or with friends if the gym freaks you out. If you just can't face the gym right now, fine. Don't. Do something else to get in shape right now until you feel like you do have the courage to go to the gym.

Get help from a pro. If you feel overwhelmed and don't know how to use the equipment or what to do, then get help. Hire a trainer to walk you through the equipment or to create a beginner program for you. That's what they do for a living and you're not going to be the first beginner exerciser they've ever worked with.

Everyone is a beginner at some point. Remember that everyone has to start somewhere, and that person you may be comparing yourself to may have been in your shoes once. You can do it. Positive self-talk truly helps you get through the fears and the tough stuff.

Next, we're going to talk about something that can also help you move through your fears, and it's a tactic that will help you achieve any goal you set your mind to.

## Step #6 Accountability Assistance

Accountability is defined as the presumption of responsibility. Essentially, when you hold yourself accountable for something, you're making a commitment to see it through. The exercise goals that you set for yourself are the first step. To make those goals a reality, it's important to create systems to hold yourself accountable.

So let's take a look at some ways to hold yourself accountable and to create systems that support you to succeed.

**Friends** – Friends are wonderful for holding you accountable. The simple act of asking you how you're doing with your exercise goals may be enough to get you out the door. However, consider creating an exercise group with friends so you can all hold one another accountable.

**Social media** – There are social media fitness apps that can help you stay accountable. You can join or create groups within the apps or you can share your progress and success. Strava, MyFitnessPal, and even the Fitbit device offers social functionality.

**Clubs** – Love to run? Join a running club. The camaraderie will keep you coming back. There are clubs in your area for a number of fitness activities. Create or join your own fitness club.

**Money** – If you're money motivated then paying money for a gym membership or a trainer can help you get to the gym.

**Personal tracking** – We've already talked about the importance of tracking your efforts, progress, and results. Sometimes this tracking system is enough to support you to create a daily exercise habit.

This is a short list of possibilities. Think about what might make you feel responsible to your goals and help you exercise every day.

## Step #7 The Power of Small Steps

One of the biggest reasons that people fail to achieve their goals is that they fail to plan and that they bite off more than they can chew. The goals are too big and unmanageable. Now no one is telling you not to set your sights high. However, every goal that you set must be manageable. It has to be achievable.

That's where small steps come into play. By creating a series small steps, you'll get to your larger goal. And small and manageable steps help you create a pattern of success.

How small should your steps be? As small as they need to be for you to achieve them.

For example, let's say that you want to run a marathon. That's a pretty big goal for anyone, and it may feel like an overwhelming goal for someone who is sedentary, maybe hasn't ever worked out in their life, and is out of shape. But with small steps, running a marathon is achievable.

You might start by walking a mile a day. Do that for a week, or two, then graduate to jogging for three minutes and walking for two minutes. Gradually increase the time that you are running so eventually you're running for thirty minutes without having to stop to walk.



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Then, once you're comfortable at that distance/time, start adding time and distance to your runs. Once or twice a week, add a mile to your run. For example, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday you run three miles. On Tuesday and Saturday you run 5, then 6, then 7 and so on until you're running 12-15 miles one day a week.

### **See how the baby steps work?**

Over time you gradually move from walking to running to running longer to eventually training for a marathon.

And the idea of walking for a mile is manageable, much more so than going from the couch to marathon training. As you gain more confidence and fitness, you'll be able to comfortably step it up and add more time and distance to your workout.

This approach works for any exercise or fitness program regardless of the movements. Start small and set intermediate goals that you know you can achieve. Build a pattern of success. Integrate these easily achieved habits into your schedule and enjoy the process.

### **One quick story...**

Ann was four months post-pregnancy. She hadn't lost an ounce of weight after having her baby and was in fact about 50 pounds overweight. Ann also hadn't exercised since she was in high school (a good ten years ago).

She decided to exercise for five minutes a day and invested in an elliptical machine. For two weeks, Ann exercised for five minutes a day. She knew she could fit that into her busy schedule and she knew it was doable.

Then she started adding minutes. Each week she added two minutes. So, the third week she exercised seven minutes, then nine, then eleven, and so on. Eventually, she was exercising about an hour a day.

She didn't focus on the weight that she needed to lose. Instead, she focused on putting in the time on the elliptical. Ann went on to pick up other activities like cycling, rock climbing, and running.

Ann not only lost that extra 50 pounds, she got back to her high school weight and felt better about herself and her life than she had in years. Small steps and a pattern of success lead to tremendous rewards.

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## Step # 8 Make Exercise a Daily Habit

At this point we've talked about motivation, setting goals, and accountability. But what about the real world. What about actually fitting exercise into your busy schedule? First, remember the baby steps. Right now, as you're getting started, you don't have to set aside an hour of your time.

You certainly can if you want to, but what's more important is to begin to make exercise part of your daily life and your routine.

So...

- **Schedule it.** Make room in your calendar and follow through. If it's on your calendar and you've set aside time for it, then honor that commitment.
- **Exercise during the best time of the day for you.** If you're a night owl, then exercise at night. If you can get up a little earlier then exercise in the morning. It is true that mornings are often best because then you get it done right away and nothing can get in your way. Exercising in the morning ensures that you get it done.
- **Make it something that you enjoy!** Exercise is not a chore. It shouldn't be something that you dread. Instead, look for exercises and movements that you enjoy. Dance, jump rope, get on a rowing machine, or hop on a treadmill and watch romantic comedies while you work out. It's easy to do something that you enjoy and it's easy to prioritize it.

So, think about the time during your day that you're most likely to succeed. What time of day should you exercise and how much time, initially, are you going to set aside? And most importantly... what are you going to do?

How are you going to move your body and start exercising?

## Step #9 Beginner Exercise Programs to Consider

First and foremost, any exercise program that you're interested in can be structured for you. Remember that everyone is a beginner at some point. So, if you want to practice martial arts, go for it. If you want to lift weights, go for it. Dancing, swimming, running, CrossFit, bicycling and anything else that you can think of can all be integrated into your lifestyle, regardless of your current fitness level.

Some exercise programs are a little easier to integrate into your life.

For example, walking is super easy to add to your life. You just need a little time and some good walking shoes. There's no special equipment required. And you can walk indoors on a treadmill when the weather is bad.

Yoga is an example of a mobility program that you can include in your week. It's always a good idea to do some cardio, some strength, and some mobility. For example, you might walk on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. On Tuesday and Thursday, you do body weight strength training, and on Saturday and Sunday you do yoga.

Find days each week for each type of exercise. Remember Ann? She started by exercising for five minutes a day? She also stretched for about five minutes after each workout and spent one day a week at yoga. She started doing bodyweight movements like sit-ups and pushups as well. You can do the same.



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Remember that all movements, even the basic pushup, are scalable to make them easier. It isn't important that you do a perfect pushup today. What is important is that you get started with your exercise program. Start moving your body. As you get stronger, and you will, your form will improve.

### **What If You're Injured or Unable to Move Like You Want to?**

Everyone has their own starting point, and any movement can be modified. For example, if you are unable to perform a full squat or a lunge, try squatting to a chair or lunging with your hand on a support device.

Instead of squatting, because it could be initially hard on your knees, you might squat to a chair. Instead of running, you can start with walking. Add a band, or two or three, to your pullups to help you get your chin over the bar. As you get stronger, you can gradually remove bands.

## **Conclusion**

Set your goals, determine your motivation, and put systems in place to hold yourself accountable. Keep in mind that exercise should be fun. That gives you permission to try different things and to learn what you enjoy doing. Work out with friends, work out at the gym or at home. Hire a trainer, use a DVD or stream an online class. There are exercise programs available to you and you get to set the pace and determine your path.

Remember that everyone starts somewhere.

It doesn't matter where you start, what matters is that you do. Leave those fears behind. Turn your sedentary lifestyle into an active one that makes you feel terrific and puts a smile on your face. All the while you'll be improving your health, losing weight, and changing your life one step at a time.