

SIMPLE STRATEGIES CAN INCREASE ODDS OF STICKING WITH AN EXERCISE ROUTINE

MADISON, WI – December 2009 – Even if an unusually busy schedule throws a curveball into your workout routine or a bout with the flu keeps you from running on the treadmill for a week, exercise psychology experts say learning to deal with such challenges is key to increasing exercise adherence.

“For a lot of people who start a fitness routine, they think that if they get derailed, for one reason or another, they might as well just stop,” said University of North Texas assistant professor Christy Greenleaf, Ph.D., who is an Executive Board member of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology. “It is true that scheduling exercise time and making it a priority is important, but you also need to learn how to have a back-up plan to cope with a challenge that arises.”

For instance, someone expecting to fit in a 45-minute workout for the day might have to divide their exercise routine into three separate “mini-workouts” if other commitments make it difficult to stick to the original plan. “The second option can be just as effective for overall health benefits and will keep the person motivated to continue with their exercise program in the long run,” according to Dr. Greenleaf.

Although time commitments are a big reason why people’s good intentions can fall by the wayside, there are other reasons why increasing exercise adherence can seem difficult, including: **unrealistic expectations, lack of social support and not setting goals.**

Dr. Greenleaf suggests the following:

- **Assess Your Expectations** – Some people think that with minimal exercise they can get an amazing body – and when that doesn’t happen quickly - they stop altogether. “While weight loss is a good goal to have, there are other things that are more controllable and more enjoyable,” Dr.Greenleaf said. Finding a form of exercise that is enjoyable - whether it is a spinning class at the gym or running outside with a friend – will increase your chances of continuing to exercise.
- **Enlist Support From Family and Friends** – If you are the only person in your family who is exercising, it makes it more challenging. Encourage members of your family to work out with you or find someone - a friend, co-worker or personal trainer - who will make you feel accountable for your actions and encourage you to keep exercising.
- **Keep Setting Goals** – It is important to set measurable goals to keep you motivated. Perhaps you want to run a 5K or swim for 30 minutes. Once you reach one goal, set another.

According to Dr. Greenleaf, once you’ve made the decision to become more active and then adopted the necessary behaviors, the key is maintenance. Learning to successfully deal with challenges and obstacles that arise becomes easier over time, making it easier to successfully reach your exercise goals.

Finding a Certified Consultant to Assist You

Do you need professional assistance in maintaining an exercise program? An AASP Certified Consultant may be the answer. While not all certified consultants specialize in working with exercisers, many have the training and knowledge to assist exercisers with similar athlete issues, such as goal setting, motivation and self-image. To find a certified consultant in your area, visit www.appliedsportpsych.org.

The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of sport and exercise psychology. Founded in 1986, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport and exercise psychology. With more than 1,200 members in 28 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its Web site, www.appliedsportpsych.org