

5 Tips for Getting off the Couch

Sometimes we *really* want to get healthy and stay active but we also *really* don't want to stop binge watching our new favorite show on Netflix. We've all been there. Some days, just the idea of leaving the couch can seem impossible. When those days happen, don't worry. There are several ways you can coax yourself up and out the door. And, no. These tips aren't ways of tricking yourself into exercise. They are tips to help you change the way you see exercise so it doesn't seem as much of a chore. If your couch has a custom made impression of your rear end, here are 5 tips for getting off the couch and out the door:

1. **Make it social:** If you make plans to get out and get active with friends, you will be more inclined to actually follow through and get off the couch. It's harder to say "no" to your friends than it is to say "no" to yourself because deep down, you don't want to disappoint them.
2. **Be flexible:** If you decide you want to workout during lunch but end up staying in the office due to last minute problems, then don't sweat it! Go to the gym when you get off. Be flexible with your time so you don't miss out on getting active. If you glue yourself to a strict schedule and unpredictable life gets in the way, you will never make it to the gym.
3. **Give yourself 5 minutes:** This age-old procrastination technique works for exercise as well. If you can start anything in 5 minutes, you can definitely get off the couch in 5 minutes. When you finally drag yourself off the couch, only commit to spending 5 minutes on your chosen exercise. Don't do less but once you get going, you may feel like doing more. If that happens, go with it! Next thing you know, you're exercising!
4. **Change the way you think about exercise:** Instead of looking at exercise as a chore you have to do in order to maintain health, think of it as time you get to spend with yourself to make you a better all around person. If you think of this as your precious alone time, you will more eager to jump off the couch and get going. Having some time alone with your thoughts is never a bad thing, so why not have that with your headphones in and running on a treadmill?
5. **Do something fun:** Exercising doesn't have to be gym equipment and running laps. Whatever gets your heart pumping is exercise, so do something fun! Playing a game of basketball ball with a group of people, playing racquetball alone, or even taking a salsa dancing class is all exercise. So plan something fun for yourself so you can look forward to doing it. When you're looking forward to it, you won't have a hard time getting off the couch!

10 Tips to Keep Your New Year's Fitness Resolutions

Fitness has to be the number one goal of most New Year's resolutions. The new year is the perfect time to set fitness goals. A new year is a chance to start fresh and do things better than you did the year before, like being more aware of your health and fitness. The problem is, not everyone is able to stick to and fulfil their New Year's resolutions. If you find yourself in this situation time and time again, have no fear! Here at Sporkey, we have 10 tips that will help you stick to your fitness resolutions once and for all.

1. **Write it down.** Write down your fitness goal and give yourself a reasonable deadline. When you are working towards a specific date, you won't fall into the trap of "I'll do better tomorrow." And writing down your goal keeps you accountable and reminds you why you started if you ever feel like giving up.
 2. **Break your big goal up into smaller goals.** Want to lose 20 pounds? Take that goal and break it down by every 5 or even 2 pounds. Create even deadlines for those smaller goals and before you know it, you will reach your larger goal by your overall deadline!
 3. **Reward yourself for reaching your mini goals.** Small rewards can be great motivation to keep moving towards your bigger goal. Try to choose rewards that don't undo all your hard work such as taking yourself to the movies or buying a new book.
 4. **Measure your progress.** Keep track of every pound that you lose, every push up that you do, or every tenth of a mile you run. Not only is this a great way for you to see how far you come, but it is an excellent gauge to push yourself further day after day.
 5. **Make your goals realistic.** Don't set goals that you know, or think, you won't be able to keep. Working out every single day sounds great, but will you really have time every day of the year? Start off by turning that goal into working out 3-5 days a week and raise it later if you feel that you can. Never be afraid to go back and edit your goals if they aren't working for you.
 6. **Keep a fitness schedule.** Go to the gym or run the same route at the same time and same day every week. Before you know it, it will become habit and you won't ever look back.
 7. **Do something you love.** If you're trying to lose weight, don't use the treadmill if you know you will be dreading it every day. Do something you think is fun! Take a dancing class or go hiking. What works for one person doesn't work for everybody else. Stay true to you!
 8. **Use fitness gadgets.** There are many different fitness gadgets on the market. Heart rate monitors, calorie counters, and step trackers are just the beginning. Find something that helps you keep track of your specific fitness goals and use it daily. Being more aware of how your actions add up make reaching your fitness goals easier.
 9. **Workout with a friend.** When you schedule a time to work out with a friend, you will feel obligated to follow through on the plans. The same goes for paying for an expensive fitness class up front. You don't want to waste your money so you will be more likely to stick with it.
 10. **Be honest.** If something isn't working for you or a workout is hurting you, don't keep going. Take time to reevaluate your goals and efforts. While having a deadline to reach helps you track your progress, if you miss it, it's not the end of the world. Remember: what is most important to any fitness resolution is your own well-being!
- And don't forget to use the Sporkey app to find and schedule your gym or play time to meet all of your fitness goals!

How to Use Sleep to Improve Your Game

When learning a new sport, or just trying to get better at an old favorite, most people focus on running drills, adding time to their workouts, or running an extra mile. While all of these are tried and true methods for increasing performance in any sport, no one ever considers adding an extra hour of sleep, or more, to their regimens. Many sports enthusiasts might even find getting extra sleep counter productive. They say there's nothing like waking up an hour early for an early morning run or workout. But it could be that that extra hour is what is costing their performance.

Everyone knows that sleep is essential for survival and that sleep deprivation is a bad thing. In fact, not enough sleep can lead to confusion, hostility, anger, and depression. It can even have a negative effect on reaction times making all those extra drills worthless. While not everyone who wakes up an hour early is sleep deprived, that extra hour could cost them the game.

In a study done on five members of the Stanford women's tennis team, sleep was linked to better sport performance and better overall feeling of well-being. The five members were monitored for three weeks as they performed drills and workouts in their normal schedule. Once enough data was collected, they were told to increase their sleep to 10 hours a night. During this time, the players experience phenomenal growth. They began performing better in all their drills and workouts. Their average valid serves and hitting depths went up while their average sprinting times dropped. All the student athletes also commented on the fact that they felt better than ever. Other studies and practices have been recreated through various sports and leagues, all with similar results. Athletes have experienced better performance and more relaxation thanks to more sleep.

It can seem challenging to incorporate more sleep into your busy schedule. We're all guilty of forgoing a few hours of sleep here and there just to get more things done, but sleep really does improve your game and health. By getting a few extra hours of sleep in, you are able to give your brain a break. It is able to recharge and get ready for a brand new day of playing and competing. Sleep is just as important as those extra drills you decide to run before calling it a day.

If you do try to improve your game by getting more sleep, it is still important to keep training, eat a healthy diet, and remember that practice is key to improving your game. Sleep will make your already existing training efforts and practices more effective and help you reach your goals quicker. When your mind is well rested, you will start to see improvements in every part of your practice.

How Nutrition and Diet Can Affect Sports Performance

Eating can sometimes become second nature. Our stomachs grow, so we eat. We reach for whatever is close by and ready to eat. Or we get a craving and follow it to the ends of the earth until it is satisfied. Eating and food usually aren't viewed as a tool to cause better sports performance. Except that it could be the most useful tool of them all.

You've probably heard the saying "you are what you eat" and that is mostly true. When you eat greasy fast food, you probably feel bloated and drug out versus when you eat a fresh home-cooked meal with plenty of veggies and feel comfortably full. Your diet affects your health and even your sports performance. It should be more than whatever is handy. Proper nutrition isn't just for those who are looking to lose weight. Everyone can benefit from a healthy diet.

A healthy diet does several things. First, it provides energy to get you through the day and through your workout. It also helps you lose or maintain weight, helps your body recover, and makes you feel your best. Your sports performance is more likely to be poor when you eat an unhealthy diet because bad nutrition can cause lead to a long recovery period, immune suppression, and weight changes.

What and how much you need to eat depends of your activity level and goals. What sport are you playing? How long do you play? How many days a week? Many people overestimate the amount of calories they burn while playing a sport. Many times, find the proper diet for you is trial and error. You will have to experiment with how long before and after playing your sport you need to eat as well as how much.

From there, you can determine how much of each food group you need to eat. A healthy diet is composed of calories, carbohydrates, protein, plenty of fluids, and vitamins. Carbs are what give you the energy to get through your sport, or even the day. Eating carbs before exercising for more than an hour is important to keep your performance up the entire time and keep you from getting too tired too fast. Eating carbs after an exercise can help you replenish the stored energy in your muscles, as well. A little over half of your daily calories should come from carbs.

Protein, another important food group, helps muscle growth and repair body tissue so it is essential when exercising and playing sports. Protein can also be used for energy. To increase your protein intake, increase the amount of calories you are eating every day. It is important to keep an eye on how much protein you eat because too much of it is stored as increased body fat and increased the chance of dehydration.

And don't forget your water! Water can often be overlooked but it is essential to keeping your body hydrated and at the right temperature. Your body can lose a lot of water through sweat while playing a sport so it is important to keep drinking even if you are not thirsty. Start by drinking two cups of water two hours before your exercise or game. Then, continue to sip water while you are active. A good rule of thumb is $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cup of water every 12-20 minutes. Clear urine tells you that you are fully rehydrated.

While proper training and practice is essential to improving your sport performance, your diet and nutrition cannot be overlooked. There are plenty of tools out there to help you track your nutrition and improve it. Take advantage of them!

5 Habits of Fit People

Staying fit can seem like a chore for people who aren't in the best of shape. When trying to establish a fitness routine when that is something that you're not used to can be a daunting task. Every who is already fit has a routine and there is something that can be learned from them. Every fit person has a few habits in common that lead them to fitness success. They don't get caught up in what they're not able to do, but they focus on the outcome of what they are able to do. Fit people are fit for a reason and that is because they stick to their goals. Here are 5 habits of fit people that you can apply to your life and reach your own fitness goals:

1. **They exercise any way they can.** Fit people grow to love exercising. That's because they get it in any way that they can. When a busy keeps them from going to the gym, they exercise at home. When rain keeps them from running their usual route, they find somewhere indoors to get it in. No matter what stands in their way, they are determined to get their exercise in.
2. **They have fun doing it.** Fit people do exercises they love instead of trudging through ones they don't. Even if the exercise is unconventional, they get out there and do it. Instead of spending hours on a treadmill or elliptical, they go dancing or rock climbing to get their exercise. They enjoy the time they spend pushing their physical limits because they do something they enjoy and know that it will pay off in the end.
3. **They aren't too strict with themselves.** Even fit people have fit days. They like to reward themselves for eating healthy and staying active. It's not like fit people never indulge themselves. They live by the 85/15 rule. They eat healthy and exercise 85% of the time, and let loose the other 15%.
4. **They don't keep up with the weight they've lost.** Fit people don't see nutrition and exercise as a method to lose weight. They do it all because they want to be healthy and in tip top shape. Fit people see fitness as a way of life and way to have a better quality of life instead of just losing weight.
5. **They aren't too hard on themselves.** Whenever they have a setback, fit people don't beat themselves up over it. Getting sick, running out of time, and many more setbacks are natural in a fitness journey and fit people realize this. They don't see a setback as a major failure. They see it as a learning opportunity to get back out there and do better next time.