

## 5 COMMON FITNESS SABOTEURS AND HOW TO DEFEAT THEM

**E**ver have those days when you feel like the universe is conspiring to keep you from reaching your fitness goals? Even the most committed fitness enthusiasts face challenges to staying active. Sometimes we sabotage ourselves. Other times, life interferes with our exercise plans.

Check out this list of common fitness saboteurs and learn how to combat them with practical strategies that really work:

- 1. Stress**—When you're up against a work deadline or the kids are sick, you may feel you can't handle one more thing, including exercise. But taking time out to go for a brisk walk or workout is one of the best things you can do during times of intense stress. Exercise helps alleviate stress, anxiety, and depression and helps boost your mood, enabling you to cope with whatever you're facing. Even a short workout is better than nothing.
- 2. Unrealistic Expectations**—Novice exercisers get frustrated when they expect big results too soon after starting a fitness program. Because they haven't lost a huge amount of weight or developed six-pack abs after only a week or two of exercise, they throw in the towel. To avoid this mistake, set realistic goals and practice extreme patience. You can't undo 10 years of a sedentary lifestyle in a week of walking. If you stick with a regimen, your body will respond to exercise. It takes at least six weeks of regular exercise and sometimes more for physiological changes to kick in.

It's called the training effect. You'll know

it's happening when your workouts start feeling easier; when you can tolerate longer, harder exercise sessions; and when you can do housework, yardwork, or climb stairs with less effort.

- 3. Overtraining**—Demanding daily workouts without scheduled rest won't help you reach your goals faster. Instead, it'll undermine your progress. Overtraining occurs when the exercise load is excessive related to the amount of time allowed for recovery. Overtaxing the body's systems leads to decreased performance. A day or two off from vigorous exercise each week is recommended for rest and recovery. This can be done through a combination of scheduling rest days into your fitness plan and alternating hard and easy workouts. For example, cross-training, swapping out a few runs for swimming or bicycling, is another effective way to avoid overtraining, but scheduled recovery days are still recommended.
- 4. The Unexpected**—You were going to walk after work, but now you've been asked to work late. Or perhaps you planned to swim, but then you find out that the pool is closed for maintenance. Life happens, and you can either throw up your hands and say, "forget it," or accept it and roll with it. Resilience

is your ability to bounce back quickly from life's surprises and setbacks. This can be improved with practice. Strategies include practicing good self-care, such as eating right, sleeping well, and exercising regularly, along with cultivating good relationships, practicing optimism, taking decisive action, etc. As you become more resilient, you're less likely to ditch your workout when something comes up. Instead, you'll be able to quickly modify your plans and move forward.

- 5. Negative Self-Talk**—"I'm so lazy, I'll never be fit;" "I didn't even exercise once this week;" "I'm such a loser." Would you talk to a friend or loved one this way? Listening to negative self-talk isn't motivating, so what's the point? Negative self-talk only destroys your confidence and motivation to the point where you can't visualize success. But you don't have to put up with it. The next time you recognize a critical thought, stop it and replace it with a positive thought, like this: "I'm so proud of myself for walking at lunch time today. It took a lot of effort, but I did it." Behavior change is hard. Give yourself some credit for every step you take toward your fitness goals. Practice intentionally giving yourself positive feedback and watch your motivation soar.

### Additional Resources

[Overtraining with Resistance Exercise](#) — American College of Sports Medicine

[Becoming More Resilient](#) — This Emotional Life, PBS

[Practicing Positive Self-Talk](#) — University of Michigan

[Stress Management](#) — HelpGuide.org



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