



# Change Your Mindset; Change Your Life

You already know that physical activity can enhance your overall quality of life. But did you know that it could actually help boost your mood, improve your sleep, and reduce your risk of chronic disease, such as diabetes?<sup>1</sup> Despite these health benefits, many struggle with developing and sticking to a regular routine. Sometimes it can be easier to make excuses, than make time for exercise. Have you ever thought, "I don't have time to go to the gym" or "I'll work-out tomorrow?" If these or other excuses have crossed your mind, then it's time to change your mindset.

## No More Excuses

Before you can successfully change your mindset, you need to understand the motivation behind your excuses. Start by taking the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Barriers to Being Active Quiz](#). It will help you determine what keeps you from being more active. Is it a shortage of time, a lack of willpower, or limited resources holding you back? Once you identify your personal barrier to being active, then you can develop a strategy to alter the way you think about exercise.

## Set SMART Goals

The strategy to change your mindset begins with setting SMART goals.<sup>2</sup> Using this method to establish realistic fitness goals will allow you to turn thoughts and good intentions into action.

- **Specific:** Goals must be detail oriented. If you struggle with sticking to a regular routine, don't say you are going to exercise more. Instead, commit to going to the gym three times this week. Then determine which days work best with your schedule.
- **Measurable:** Goals must be calculable. If you track your body weight and body composition over time or log how far you run in 30 minutes, you can monitor your progress.
- **Attainable:** Goals must be realistic. If you are not an experienced hiker, start with a few local day hikes before signing up for a three-day trek through the wilderness.



- **Relevant:** Goals must be appropriate. If you want to improve your flexibility and range of motion, add a yoga class or stretching exercises to your routine instead of more weight training activities.
- **Time-Bound:** Goals must have deadlines. If you want to be more physically active as a family, organize a weekend basketball tournament and practice shooting hoops together every night after dinner to get ready for the big game.

For activity ideas for all fitness levels, check out HPW's [Get Active to Be Healthy](#) and [Get Moving! Healthy Activity Ideas for Adults](#).

## Develop New Habits

SMART goals lead to new habits, but it takes time. Healthy habits don't develop overnight. If you find yourself making excuses for not being active, don't beat yourself up. Negative self-talk will undermine your progress. Instead, stop what you're doing and review your SMART goals. Determine what changes you can make to get your fitness plan back on track.

By identifying barriers to physical activity and developing strategies to overcome them, you can change the way you think about exercise. Once you change your mindset, you can begin to form new habits. A regular exercise routine can improve your health and overall well-being, which can ultimately change your life.

## References

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf>. Published October 2008. Accessed March 2016.

<sup>2</sup> The American Council on Exercise. Fit Facts. Reaching Your Goals the SMART Way. <http://www.acefitness.org/acefit/fitness-fact-article/2637/reaching-your-goals-the-smart-way/>. Accessed March 2016.