



Barriers to Exercise

We all know exercise is healthy for us and it's something we need to do. However, we still struggle to do it. Why? What stops us?

Today, we're going to discuss seven common barriers and how to work through them.

LACK OF TIME: "I don't have time for exercise" is the most common issue heard. This is often cited as the primary reason people struggle with regular exercise. However, typically there is available time, but exercise isn't a priority. We all have the same 24 hours in a day; it depends on how we use them. A common recommendation for people is to exercise either first thing in the morning or immediately after work. Additionally, you can add up exercise throughout the day. Take a 10-minute walk at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and you've accumulated 30 minutes of activity for the day.

FEAR OF INJURY: This barrier is common for those that have little exercise experience or have a history of injury. Overcoming this barrier is done by taking it slow and starting an activity you are comfortable with. For example, if you feel you can walk and not run, then start with walking and work your way up to running. If you feel you are unable to walk, look for a recreational center or gym for swimming or water aerobics, then work up from there.

SOCIAL INFLUENCE: This barrier can go two different directions. It can mean that you are embarrassed to exercise in front of others. It can also mean you have no one to exercise with.

For the first issue, it can feel very intimidating to enter a gym when you are overweight. It may even feel uncomfortable going for a walk in your own neighborhood. You think you'll look silly or embarrassed by your inability to walk very far. However, when people are in the gym, they are so focused on themselves, they won't even notice you. And if they do notice, they're going to feel encouraged and happy for you; they won't be wondering why you're there. Maybe start in your own home for a while before hitting the gym.

The other part of this barrier is the lack of an exercise buddy. This can be a challenge. Some do not like to exercise alone, and really need a support person. Find a walking buddy, like a neighbor, friend, or coworker. Other people may feel the same way as you and are also looking for an exercise buddy; you will never know unless you ask them!

PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS: Physical limitations and pain are the top two reasons people don't like to exercise. Overweight individuals often have back, knee, or hip pain. It can be overwhelming to be told to do an hour of cardio when you feel you're unable to walk around a grocery store. Think about what you CAN do, not what you CAN'T do. Can you walk for five minutes? Good, start there. Are you unable to walk? Then start with chair exercises.



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Can you get into a swimming pool? Good, sign up for an arthritis water aerobics class. There are options out there for everyone.

LACK OF ENERGY: Many overweight individuals struggle with energy levels. This could be due to health issues, poor sleep, poor habits/routines, diet, lack of exercise, etc. It can feel like a huge challenge to start an exercise routine if you're tired all the time. When someone exercises regularly, they tend to feel better and have more energy. Improvements to your diet, exercise, and sleep patterns will also increase energy and have you feeling better soon.

LACK OF MOTIVATION: Motivation is unreliable. Motivation is not something we can count on. Your motivation is going to come and go. Some days you will feel like exercising and eating healthy, and other days you won't. This is why you want to rely on habit and routine. Many fall into the trap of waiting until motivated to start exercising. If you are waiting to feel motivated, you are going to be waiting a long time. Just start!

LACK OF RESOURCES: Many do not have spare income for a gym membership or home exercise equipment, but there are lots of free and inexpensive ways to exercise. Walking is free and can be done anywhere. For strength training, use soup cans, water bottles, milk jugs, or purchase inexpensive bands/dumbbells for your home.

These are the most common barriers to exercise. It can be helpful to talk to someone, such as a friend or counselor, to help problem-solve on ways to fit exercise into your daily routine.