

## Motivation for Diet and Exercise

Getting in shape through diet and exercise is rarely a linear process; even the most dedicated person is bound to have setbacks.

"But by setting realistic goals and facing your fears and stumbling blocks, you can get fit and improve your health as a result," says Michael Gerrish, an exercise physiologist, psychotherapist and author of "The Mind-Body Makeover Project."

According to Mr. Gerrish, addressing your inner obstacles -- the mental and physical UFOs (Unidentified Fitness Obstacles) that block your progress -- is the key to success.

He offers the following suggestions for using your mind to make over your body and your life.

Expect to question your goals as time goes on. "Remember that everyone has lots of ups and downs on the way to reaching their goals, and doubting your goal doesn't mean it's not worthwhile," says Mr. Gerrish. "If you resume some old unhealthy habits for awhile, simply focus on getting back into your program and doing the best you can."

### **Trust your instincts**

Learn to trust your instincts and don't judge (or ignore) your moods. "Don't feel compelled to shake feelings off; instead, heed the message they give," says Mr. Gerrish. "Let them act as a guide for determining how and when to shift gears."

Stay focused on what success means to you; forget about what other people think. "Don't use societal standards as a basis for setting your goals," says Mr. Gerrish. "If you do, you'll set yourself up to feel like you've failed regardless of what you achieve."

Learn from what you see others do, but remember you're unique. Resist the urge to compete and compare -- it'll send you down the wrong path. "Keep things in perspective, because we don't get dealt the same cards -- genes, athletic ability, metabolism," says Mr. Gerrish.

### **Set realistic goals**

Resist the urge to set lofty goals you'll be slow or unlikely to reach. Instead, be more modest and set "mini-goals" you can reach in a few days or weeks. "Achieving success breeds confidence and ensures your efforts are fueled to stick," says Mr. Gerrish. "For example, instead of setting a goal of losing three inches off your waist, strive to lose one inch in a month."

Stop to celebrate every success before you set any more goals. "If you have a habit of raising the bar every time you achieve a goal, take more time to savor your success," says Mr. Gerrish. "You need to acknowledge how far you've come to increase how far you'll go."

Stop criticizing your body. Think about what you say to yourself and the words you typically choose. Are they mostly self-defeating words -- for example, "I'm not" or "I can't"? Replace all negative statements and thoughts with ones like "I am" and "I can."

You're going to fall off your diet and exercise program now and then, so prepare to climb back on. "All of us go off our diets and miss a workout once in a while, but if you climb 'back on your horse' when you do, over time you'll stop falling off," says Mr. Gerrish. "With practice and patience you'll learn how to center yourself and control the reins."

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