



Two stories caught my attention today. One was Arsenal player Kolo Toure being suspended for alleged drugs use and the other was British runner Mo Farah dropping his long-term coach for a new coach in the USA. Now Toure may well be found innocent, but many sports people have sought to gain a small advantage through using illegal substances. Similarly Mo Farah is hoping a change in coach will help him find the extra second or two that will bring Olympic gold.

Sports people go to massive lengths, both legitimate and otherwise, to make miniscule gains. Did you know competitive swimmers shave their bodies to reduce the drag caused by body hair? Or that bicycles were tested in last year's Tour de France to see if they had miniscule motors hidden inside their frames? I could hide a mini motor in my bicycle, shave all my body hair and train with Mo Farah's coach, but I would still get beaten by an international triathlete dressed in a monkey suit and riding a Penny Farthing. So why bother training at all?

Sometimes it is hard to get motivated to exercise and at these times it is important to look at why you exercise or play a sport at all. If you can remember why you do something then you can re-motivate yourself to train.

Many people exercise for weight loss. Using a positive image of your goal really helps, perhaps picturing yourself in that Little Black Dress or in your beach wear. You can also make small changes to your training for more effective for weight loss which you can read about in one of the other articles ("The world's best aerobic exercise").

However this doesn't necessarily make training fun. Instead set a goal to aim for in each session, so you feel a sense of achievement. Try swimming one extra length or lifting one extra repetition on the weights, but if you still find training a drag, then maybe it's time to find something you do enjoy. There are hundreds of activities that will get you hot, sweaty and burning calories, so go and find one you enjoy!

Some people train for health reasons and if that's your motivating factor you need to scare yourself a little by thinking about what will happen if you don't train. Perhaps exercise stops your back seizing up or there is a history of heart problems in your family. You might have started exercise to avoid these problems and you need to consider the implications if you stop.

Personally, I exercise because I'm really competitive. Losing a game of snap to my five-year old niece makes me sulk, so training helps me win. If I can't face training I picture myself having that extra burst of speed at the end of a race or reaction speed to make a critical save to get going. I also play sports on a regular basis, from high-level hockey to five-a-side football with mates because the standard doesn't matter, it's the chance to compete.

So if you find yourself struggling to train, think about what it is that made you start. Find ways to push yourself a little harder or get a little nearer your goal and if that doesn't work, try something new. You could even try triathlons dressed as a monkey!