

## Motivation - Staying in control

### **Introduction**

We all know that a healthy diet and regular exercise are integral to a fit and healthy lifestyle. We may be motivated to fulfil them for a while, but what happens when this drive to get up, do the exercise and eat the right things starts to taper off?

### **How are we motivated?**

When it comes to being motivated everyone is different. Some people respond more positively to active encouragement, such as picturing the end result and how this could be of benefit in their life; others can be scared into taking action, possibly through reading a shocking magazine statistic or as the result of an uncomfortable social situation. Either way, motivation is needed to trigger the 'stop thinking and start doing' response.

### **Not for long...**

Depending on the individual, motivation can act for a relatively short time and has the tendency to come in bursts (if you've ever met a smoker who has tried to give up several times but never succeeds this concept is easy to understand). The initial wave of motivation, wherever it comes from, can inspire us to the point where we feel in complete control. This feeling or state of mind gives us the strength to resist temptation but, unfortunately, can often wear off leaving us more vulnerable to our vices. If we give in to these, by ordering that takeaway or snacking when we know we shouldn't, it can be a very negative experience and can leave us susceptible to thought processes such as 'I've already failed, I might as well give up' or 'now I've had one chocolate I might as well have a couple more'. This is clearly not a constructive state of mind to be in and explains how people can easily end up stuck in a rut with bad habits they don't want.

### **Avoiding the rut**

Prevention is better than cure – in other words staying in control is easier than trying to get back in control of your lifestyle. Eating and drinking poorly and/or forgetting to exercise, even for a short time, not only reduces your feeling of physical well-being, but also make you feel guilty and even depressed. We need to try and reinforce our good habits on a regular basis by constantly reminding ourselves of the life we are trying to lead and try to avoid slip-ups as frequently as possible.

### **My most effective motivator**

I believe that we reinforce our motivation by doing the right thing - one constructive act towards a healthy lifestyle, for example eating a good breakfast or having a productive session on the cross-trainer, is the biggest form of motivation an individual can experience. Most people can relate to how it feels after a good workout and only you can generate this feeling, which is why it is so effective. It is for this reason we need to renew our motivation as often as we can. How? By doing something every day that reminds you what you are trying to achieve. This could be going for a walk, bottling the water you will consume in that day, or going to your local shop and picking out a selection of fruit and vegetables.

### **Putting it into practice**

Actually putting aside the time each day to perform an activity that will motivate you is the biggest step to your success. By starting the day with a healthy breakfast such as porridge or

muesli you are kick-starting your metabolism and taking one step in the right direction. If your current workout schedule is 2 or 3 times a week increase it to 4 or 5. You can do this by interspersing days that you train harder (such as personal training sessions or sessions you already complete on your own) with lighter doses of exercise such as a 20 minute walk or some floor exercises you can do in your living room. Try and do something you enjoy at least once a week, such as dancing or horse riding.

### **Summary**

Initial motivation, whether to give up smoking, improve your diet or fulfil a regular exercise plan can often deteriorate. Momentary lapses of will power can often lead to a vicious circle of bad habits. Preventing yourself from falling into these bad habits in the first place is easier than trying to climb out of the rut of a bad habit. So keep reminding yourself what you are trying to achieve by taking a step forward each and every day. By packing your week with little reminders you will not only benefit from the diet and extra exercise but will be stronger, more resilient to temptation and more likely to achieve your goals.