

A SURPRISINGLY SIMPLE NEW WAY TO ENJOY EXERCISE MORE

Some adults love a tough workout, and others dread any activity more strenuous than washing their hair. Given that 80% of Americans fail to meet government guidelines for aerobic and strength training, it's obvious that most of us fall into the second camp.

A new study by the University of Freiburg in Germany suggests that just 2 changes can make you enjoy exercise more. Participants with similar fitness levels were asked to ride a stationary bicycle for the same amount of time. Those who considered themselves to be athletic said the activity was more enjoyable, and required less effort.

The researchers concluded that personal expectations made the difference. **The secret is to believe in your athletic abilities and the benefits of exercising.**

Think how much easier it would be for you to stick to a workout program if you really enjoyed doing it. Try these tips for building up your confidence and knowledge.

BELIEVING IN YOUR ATHLETIC ABILITIES:

1. **Develop your own style.** Each of us has our own personal interests and signature strengths. You may like ballroom dancing or playing competitive sports. You may excel at sprinting or long-distance running. **Choose activities that make you feel accomplished.**

2. **Create challenges.** Set goals that will encourage you to keep going. Work at strengthening your tennis serve or increasing your lung capacity so you can swim more laps.
3. **Use external rewards.** Intrinsic motivation is more powerful, but you can give yourself treats to help you feel fulfilled while you're waiting to reach major milestones. Promise yourself a pedicure or a weekend outing to celebrate any week you visit the gym consistently.
4. **Share social support.** While you're cheering yourself on, it also helps to have family and friends on your side. Team up with an exercise buddy, post your workout plans on a fitness forum, and ask your family for the help you need.
5. **Find a role model.** Look for someone who has qualities and achievements that you admire. You can pick someone close to you or someone you see in the news. **Study what they do and focus on what you have in common.**
6. **Repeat affirmations.** Create positive statements that help you to realize your worth and make changes in your life. Write them down and read them when you're feeling stressed.

UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

1. **Do some research.** Browse online or visit the library to read about how exercise affects your body and mind. **Visualize yourself having more energy, strengthening your muscles, and reducing your risk for serious medical conditions.**
2. **Take a course.** Sign up for rock climbing lessons or take an anatomy class at a community college. Learn more about your body and how to care for it.
3. **Work with a trainer.** Maybe you prefer working with a professional one-on-one. Ask friends and fellow gym members for recommendations. A customized program can deliver impressive results.
4. **Talk with your doctor.** Ask your physician about any concerns you have. They may be able to suggest what priorities would be helpful for you, such as lowering your blood pressure or rehabilitating a previous injury.
5. **Evaluate your performance.** As you become more physically fit, you may notice the effects spilling over into many areas of your life. Maybe

you're eating more vegetables or responding more effectively to feedback at work.

6. **Listen to your body.** Feeling good may be the ultimate benefit of working out. Take pleasure in your flat stomach or glowing skin.

When you want to exercise, you'll find ways to overcome any barriers like being too busy or avoiding discomfort. A positive attitude about your athletic abilities and the benefits of physical activity will help you to stay healthy and fit.