

## Exercise and Staying Motivated

It's easy to start an exercise program. In fact, many of us start a new program every year in January! However, actually starting a program and staying with the program is often another story.

The following tips may help you stay motivated:

- **Choose an activity that fits your lifestyle.** If you like to exercise alone, try walking or biking. You might also enjoy noncompetitive activities such as in-line skating or working out at a health club. If group activities appeal to you, consider enrolling in an aerobic exercise or water aerobics class, or joining a league or team for bowling, volleyball or softball.
- **Set goals.** Start with simple goals that are realistic and achievable. It is way too easy to get frustrated and give up on goals that are too ambitious. A short-term goal might be to walk 5 minutes once or twice a day just to establish a workable tolerance level. The next goal might be to gradually work up to 20 minutes three or four times a week. A long-term goal might be to complete a 10-kilometer (10K) race after you complete several months of training. Many doctors recommend that you exercise for at least 30 minutes on most, if not all, days of the week.
- **Reward yourself.** After each exercise session, take a few minutes to sit down and relax. Think about the feelings of accomplishment and self-esteem you are developing as you exert control over your own behavior. This type of internal reward can help you make a long-term commitment to regular exercise. External rewards can also help keep you motivated. When you reach a longer-range goal, consider treating yourself to a new pair of walking shoes or a new CD.
- **Start slowly.** Being too aggressive too quickly sabotages many fitness programs. It's often not until the next day that you discover you've overdone it, and the resulting pain and stiffness can be very discouraging. It's better to progress slowly than to push too hard and be forced to abandon your program because of pain or injury.
- **Fit exercise into your daily routine.** Look for opportunities throughout the day to slip in some physical activity. Go for a walk during your child's music lesson. Park at the far end of the lot and take the stairs instead of the elevator at work. Be creative.
- **Be flexible.** If you're traveling or you're especially busy on a certain day, it's OK to adapt your exercises to accommodate your schedule. If you develop a cold or the flu, don't worry if you take a day or two off from your program. The important thing is to get back on track when you feel better.
- **Have some fun.** You're more likely to stick with an exercise program if you're having fun. Change up your workout and try something different!

For more information please contact your Employee Assistance Program at 800-862-3398.