

Ways to make exercise more enjoyable

November 4 2019, by Len Canter



Only about half of all American adults meet the national guidelines for aerobic activity and only about one-fifth meet the combined aerobic and strength-training goals. One reason is that some people just don't find it

enjoyable, so they don't stick with it.

Changing your mindset can lead not only to increases in exercise time, but also feeling good about working out.

A study in the journal *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* looked at [overweight women](#) and their reaction to 15-minute high-intensity interval workouts designed to get faster results compared to continuous and longer-lasting exercise.

The researchers found that the slow and steady approach was met more positively, and left participants looking forward to another workout rather than tired and discouraged. In another test, they found that starting out at an intense pace and tapering off to a very low intensity was also more pleasurable than the other way around.

A separate study in the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* found that many influences are at work when it comes to developing a fondness for exercise, including mental engagement. It helps to choose an activity that you're confident about. For instance, if you're a poor swimmer, you won't feel comfortable in a water class. If you are self-conscious about how you look in exercise clothes, group classes may not be for you right now.

Changing the way you view exercise can also help. Rather than a chore, see it as a way to reach other goals, like being able to enjoy a nature walk without getting winded. One mind-over-matter technique is to picture yourself enjoying the exercise before you start moving.

Focus on each milestone you reach, like being able to complete a mile walk in less and less time, or being able to increase the tension on an [exercise](#) bike.

Positive feelings come from reaching a [goal](#), even a simple one, so set a timer on your watch and let the countdown motivate you.

More information: The American Council on Exercise has more ways to make [exercise](#) more enjoyable.

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