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How to Stick to Exercise: 7 Strategies That Worked

By Lauren Krouse

Reviewed by Claudia Levi, R.N.

July 15, 2025

Many things can get in the way of sticking to an exercise routine: discomfort in your body, a busy work schedule, a tight budget — and even just the general dread of feeling like this is something you have to do.

But you can start anywhere and eventually fall in love with movement. The key is to acknowledge what's holding you back, bravely push past that inner voice telling you to stay home, and — most importantly — find exercise that you love.

Work with Your Work Schedule

"Because I worked late, finding a workout with the right timing was important. I found dance fitness classes a 10-minute walk from home. The music made workouts enjoyable. Instead of focusing on looks, I focused on enjoying myself. I went three times a week, then five. Surprisingly, I don't feel tired afterward and my mood improves significantly." —Sharon A.

Find Motivation in a Community

"My friend joined CrossFit and told me I could lift heavier and get stronger if I joined. I was intimidated by the newness of it all, but most everyone was welcoming and the coaches encouraged us to introduce ourselves. I've learned that I need to work out with other people, which is why I love my CrossFit crew." —Lauren D.

Make It Fun and Social

"I have a sedentary job, so keeping active is a high priority. I've found that two things help: engaging in something I actually enjoy and sharing it with a friend or partner. For me, walking, hiking, and yoga fit the bill. I recall a few times when I walked six miles catching up with a friend, and it felt like we'd been walking for 10 minutes. The time flies by." —Nicole H.

Seek Activity That Brings You Zen

"A year ago, I started going to spin classes in a dimly lit studio. It felt like meditation, with a wonderful balance of coaching and freedom. Now, instead of wrestling myself to cram a workout in, I plan my week around spin classes." —Kate B.

Set Goals You Can Achieve

"What's working for me right now is setting weekly run goals. It started with committing to running a 5K every week, which became twice a week because the weather is getting nicer. I love the break I get between runs, and feeling the results of my stamina and energy is so rewarding." —Vanessa L.

Remember: Some Movement Is Better Than None

"I do regular workouts of power walking and weights. I'm intentional about exercising five days a week, but I'm not intentional about how long I'll be working out. I just constantly remind myself that it's only 30 or 40 minutes out of my day. Even if I go for just 25 minutes, it's still going to make a big difference." —Liz J.

Focus on the Joyful Parts

"I stopped looking for a workout that would take me to a physical aesthetic and instead started seeking joy in movement. I danced during walks to build enough stamina to run a 5K. Handstands were so fun that calisthenic drills felt worth it. Rock climbing felt the same way. I don't plan to get a good sweat, but when I'm having fun, it happens anyway." —Nina L.

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Thanks for sharing, **carolyavuli**! It's good that you've found some go-to ways to help clear your head. Walking has helped me clear my head plenty of times too. 😊

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Some movement is better than none, this is exactly what I tell myself on those days that I'm tired, or my schedule is full. If nothing else, I do an extended walk around my yard and some stretching in my living room to get in some movement. My goal is an hour a day, but sometimes it's only 15-20 minutes and I still tell myself, good job. Some movement is better than none!

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