

## GATHERING SUPPORT FOR YOUR ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

**S**taying active and fit in a largely sedentary culture takes effort and, at times, may feel like more than you can handle. Even the most dedicated fitness enthusiasts and athletes go through times when they just don't feel like exercising. Set yourself up for success by creating a personalized support system to help you stay on track.

### Be Prepared

First, pinpoint the obstacles that sometimes keep you from being active. Examples include long working hours, home responsibilities, procrastination, lack of energy and bad weather. Next, think about the kind of support that would make a difference in getting you up and out the door when hitches happen.

Could your supervisor lighten your workload, so you can leave on time? Could your spouse or partner cook dinner 2-3 times a week, so you can squeeze in a workout? Could you purchase some rainproof outerwear? Sometimes, all it takes is some planning, preparation, and problem-solving to get the job done.

### Get Social

Identify friends, family members, neighbors or co-workers who share your enthusiasm and interest in staying active. Talk about your fitness goals, and ask about theirs. Invite others to join you for a group fitness class, a brisk walk, or a fun run. Exercising with a friend offers both accountability and social fun. And hanging out with an active crowd increases your odds of sticking with your exercise program.

In fact, one study found that people tend to imitate the positive or negative behaviors of others around them. Subjects had a greater level of self-control when surrounded by others with strong self-control and exhibited poor self-control when surrounded by subjects who behaved badly. The effect of role modeling was so strong that even when subjects simply thought about someone with strong or weak self-control, they behaved similarly. Researchers concluded that self-control, or lack thereof, is contagious. If you're serious about leading a fitness-focused lifestyle, foster friendships with people who will reinforce your healthy habits.

### Tell It Like It Is

One of the most important ways to get support for staying active is simple. Just ask for it! The key is to be specific. Your spouse may believe that nagging you to get up early to go for a run is supportive, but you may feel differently. The people in your life aren't mind-readers. Chances are, they'd be glad to offer support, if they knew what would be most helpful.

You might not even know what you want. So, give it some thought before you recruit support partners. Write down exactly what you'd

like to say and then say it. Review these examples, and jot down a few of your own:

- *Would you like to meet me for a 30-minute walk, twice a week?*
- *If you could watch the kids after work on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, I could visit the gym for a workout on the way home.*
- *It would really help me to check in with someone about my exercise progress once a week. Would you be willing to do that?*

### Tap Into Everyday Resources

Gather reliable fitness news updates via magazines, books, podcasts, and [online portals](#). Staying up-to-date with fitness research, trends and training tips supports your active lifestyle, helping you cultivate a fitness mindset and keeps your exercise program fresh.

Smartphone apps, online programs and even auto-alerts can help you remember to exercise and track your progress. Your employer may offer discounted gym memberships or personalized health coaching as part of your health benefits package.

### Smart Strategies

Getting fit and staying active can be work at times, but offers priceless rewards. You are not alone. Check around to see what's available and take advantage of every opportunity to build support for physical activity into your daily life.

### Additional Resources

[ACE GetFit](#) — American Council on Exercise

[Exercise Adherence Tips](#) — Association for Applied Sport Psychology

[The Power of a Gentle Nudge](#) — *The Wall Street Journal*



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