

# The Fitness Motivation Monitor

ISSUE 59 – FEBRUARY 2012

## Keeping Your Resolutions

Adapted from IDEA Fitness Journal January 2012

In 2011, *TIME* magazine named the joint goal of losing weight and getting fit as the most commonly broken New Year's resolution. There are many reasons people fall off the workout wagon: Too tired. Too busy. Too boring. Too hard. What can you do to keep yourself motivated to workout and keep your resolution this year?

The latest research shows that lack of exercise is *not* a motivational problem; it is that people have a strong counter-motivation *not* to exercise. Common motivations for not exercising include wanting to spend more time with friends and family; trying to get more done at work; and avoiding anticipated pain, fatigue, injury or embarrassment. These motivations are not just distractions; they are compelling goals that often trump exercise motivations like losing weight or improving health. In order to keep your resolutions, you must address your counter-motivations or they will continue to compete with your fitness goals.

One key reason that people fail to keep their fitness resolutions has to do with how we think about the future. When people were asked by researchers to predict how much they would exercise in the next month, they automatically based their answers on an ideal world: No sick kids, no late meetings, no back pain flare-ups, no must-see reality TV marathons. When researchers followed up to find out how much they actually worked out, the reality was far less than predicted. But, despite this reality check, the same people *increased* their estimates for how much they would exercise in the *next* month. It was as if they viewed the previous month of competing demands as the exception, not the rule. This unrealistic optimism helps people stay positive about an exercise goal ("It will be much easier to exercise next week"), while giving them convenient excuses for not exercising ("This week was insane").

When setting your goals for exercise you must plan for obstacles and recognize potential conflicts. This way you will not be surprised by the competing demands and can set a realistic exercise plan you can stick with.

A tool you can use to help you recognize obstacles and create a plan to overcome them is to use **proactive pessimism**. One such intervention recruited 256 women

who were interested in becoming more active. Half the women received only basic information about a healthy lifestyle, while the other half were asked to complete the following thought experiment:

1. What is your most important exercise goal?
2. What would be the most positive outcomes of meeting this goal?
3. What is the biggest obstacle to this goal?

Then they answered three questions about the obstacle:

1. When and where is this obstacle most likely to occur?
2. What can I do to prevent this obstacle from occurring?
3. What *specific thing* will I do to help get back to my exercise goal when this obstacle happens?

Participants were encouraged to repeat this exercise every day, refining it based on what they noticed about their own motivations, obstacles and behaviors. Completing this exercise doubled the average amount of time participants spent exercising each week (from 46 minutes to 103 minutes). The change started in the very first week, and the effect lasted all the way through a 4-month follow up.

Take home point; don't focus on reaching goals and then using excuses for why you don't. Instead, focus on real life and how to overcome the obstacles that stand in your way. Each time you need to decide – will I exercise today? Ask yourself, "How will I feel tomorrow about the decision I made today?"

Happy thinking and doing!



Deborah Longenecker



**Get started on your resolutions with my Exercise Readiness Evaluation!**

Refer your friends and family to the Fitness Motivation Monitor.

**Call: (908) 238-1185**

**Email: [spencellen@earthlink.net](mailto:spencellen@earthlink.net)**

## Music Aids Performance

IDEA Fitness Journal January 2012



Do you want to reach new levels of power performance? Why not try exercising while playing your favorite tunes?

A study published in the *Journal of Strength & Conditioning Research* suggests that athletic performance improves when a participant gets to choose his own music. The study involved 20 trained college males who performed three bench-press sets to failure at 75% of 1-repetition maximum (1RM) and three jump squats at 30% 1RM. Subjects did the exercises twice – without music and again while listening to self-selected music.

Bench press performance didn't change, and there was no statistical difference in squat jump height. However, with the music on take-off velocity, rate of velocity development and rate of force development were all higher in the jump squats. And, while the men reported more fatigue after exercising to their chosen tunes, they also reported greater levels of vigor.

“This study demonstrated increased performance during an explosive exercise and an altered mood state when listening to self-selected music,” the study authors reported. “Therefore, listening to self-selected music might be beneficial for acute power performance.”

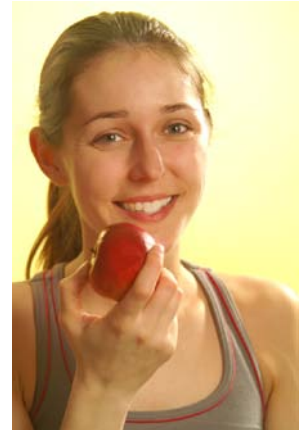
Bottom line, choosing your own tunes will increase your exercise performance and can keep you feeling better at the end. Why not create some song lists now for your next workout, ones that will motivate you to keep moving, make you feel stronger and faster.

## Snacking Healthier for Diet

From Food and Nutrition News January 2012

It seems counterintuitive to suggest that people should be snacking more but a study published in the November 14, 2011, edition of the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* concluded that increased snacking could positively impact overall diet quality.

Claire A. Zizza, PhD, associate professor of nutrition at Auburn University in Alabama, and co-author Beibei Xu, PhD, found that people who snack between meals tend to have healthier diets than those who stick to eating only at regular mealtimes. Study subjects who snacked more frequently consumed less sodium and ate



more fruit, whole grains and milk than their counterparts. In addition, the more subjects snacked, the more likely they were to eat both healthy snacks and healthy meals. Still, frequent snackers fell short of eating enough vegetables, and the overall healthiness of the study participants' diets left room for improvement.

Zizza and Xu used data from 11,209 people aged 20 and older who participated between 1999 and 2004 in the larger National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, which included interviews and physical exams. The researchers used a standard scoring system that ranked the healthiness of diets on a scale from 1 to 100 (100 being healthiest). They discovered that the more times a day people snacked, the higher they tended to score. Those who reported never snacking scored 49.3, on average, while those who snacked four or more times a day averaged 51.6.

While snacking may prove to be beneficial to health, what you snack on is important, too. Stocking up on fruits, vegetables, cheese and nuts is a great way to snack smart and stay healthy.