



Goal setting = smart training

The following Goal Setting Checklist will help ensure that your goal list covers all of your health and fitness needs. Remember, motivation is only effective when the goal is meaningful and fits your individual requirements. Once you've set personal goals with your trainer, remember to break a long term goal, like losing 10 kilograms or running a fun run 10 minutes faster than a previous best, into more manageable goals. These are not only more likely to be realistic, but also allow you to achieve one goal (short term) while keeping the next attainable.

1. Identify why you are exercising. Looking, performing and feeling better are good long term goals, but don't forget about short term, specific goals. A good short term goal might be to strength train three days per week. This is realistic and achievable, and will serve to motivate you until you reach your more ambitious goals.

2. What motivates you to exercise? Ask yourself, write it down and place it where you can easily and regularly see it. This will help keep you on track to achieve your goals.

3. Orient yourself to a variety of activities. This will help you avoid boredom, overuse injuries and find activities you enjoy.

4. Consider your level of enjoyment when exercising. If you like what you're doing you'll be more likely to incorporate fitness into a permanent lifestyle change.

5. Commit to exercising regularly. Set minimum ('I'm so busy with life') and optimum ('my life is under control') training schedules. If you do this, you're more likely to stay active and achieve results (which, in itself is motivating!). Repeat this phrase: 'Exercise is a year-round habit, like personal hygiene. It is not a part time hobby.' And always remember health and fitness is easier to maintain, than regain!

6. Keep your workouts to reasonable lengths. Is yours a schedule you can realistically commit to for a lifetime and still maintain other important responsibilities? Make sure the number of days you work out and the duration of your workouts are in line with what you want to accomplish. Be realistic! While you can attain substantial health and fitness benefits from three workouts per week, you won't ever be an elite competitive athlete on that training schedule (if that's your goal!).

7. Identify the big picture. Through your commitment to consistent workouts and other positive lifestyle changes, keep in mind that your ultimate goal is to improve the quality of life.

8. Write specific goals. Be as specific as possible in detailing your goals and how you are going to attain them. Fitness goals can be performance or health related, or as simple as lifting more weight, losing fat or even just exercising regularly. Then put your plan into action. Furthermore, take the steps necessary to 'make it happen' (schedule it!).



9. Schedule and organise your day. People who exercise in the morning are more likely to stick with their program. Regardless, somehow schedule exercise into your day so that it gets done. View it as an important appointment you would not dare miss and selfishly protect this sacred time. Written plans are more likely to be accomplished than good intentions, so, 'Don't just think it, ink it!'

10. Spend a reasonable effort exercising. If you're going to spend the time exercising, why not maximise your fitness return? Going through mindless motions, is different than a sincere and concentrated effort. Developing this attitude will make the time you spend exercising more productive and enjoyable.

11. Avoid missing workouts. Feel at least a tinge of guilt when you let your commitment to workouts slide, but feel comfortable about missing a few workouts when injury or sickness require it.

12. Feel good after a workout. If you don't feel a positive post-exercise glow, it is not likely that you will continue. Being a little tired from a champion effort will help you feel good!

Motivation is only effective when your goals are meaningful and fit your individual needs, desires and likes. Remember, so once you've achieved your shorter term goals, strive to achieve your longer term ones. Good luck! Enjoy!

Article by Douglas S Brooks, MS (ExPhys)

Douglas holds a Master's degree in exercise physiology. As an author, lecturer, trainer and video personality, his knowledge of fitness is recognized by professionals and the public worldwide. He is the author of six major texts, as well as numerous manuals and articles relating to personal training. Douglas frequently conducts lectures and workshops on exercise physiology, kinesiology, strength training and personal training across the globe. He can be contacted at Moves International in the United States at www.MovesIntFitness.com