



CONSUMED



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MOTIVATION TOP 10: INSPIRE YOURSELF TO REACH YOUR GOALS

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Have you ever felt inspired to exercise, eat better, lose weight or make other positive changes, only to feel your enthusiasm slip away as time passes or the going gets tough? When you understand how to tap into your personal motivators, you'll know what to do to maintain and restore your drive and inspiration. This Top 10 list shows you how.

- 1. Why Now?** In order to identify your own powerful motivators, take out a piece of paper and answer these two questions:
 - Why is it important to me to make a change (for example, stop yo-yo dieting)?
 - Why do I want to make this change now, at this point in my life?Now, think about what you've written and challenge yourself to dig deeper to uncover even more meaningful answers. Ask yourself the two questions again: So why is *that* important to me? And why *now*? You may need to ask the "why" questions a few times to peel back the layers and get to the personal motivators that feel like powerful fuel for change. You'll know you've hit on something when you experience a strong emotion.
- 2. Set Goals.** You wouldn't start out on a trip without knowing where you're going, would you? Knowing your endpoint helps you decide on the path for getting there, creating a detailed map for your brain to follow. Write your goals in positive, present, measurable terms, such as "I walk four days a week for 30 minutes." Post your goals where you'll see them often.
- 3. Start Small.** One of the greatest sources of motivation is seeing progress. If you're having a hard time

getting started, ask yourself, "What's the smallest goal I could set that I'd be likely to achieve?" and start there. Keep in mind that your goal isn't perfection, it's direction.

- 4. Be Consistent.** Consistency is one of the keys to creating a habit. For example, if your goal is to walk five days a week or to start meditating daily, write it down on your calendar or on your "to do" list and treat it like any other important commitment. Of course it's a lot easier to be consistent when your goals are exciting, interesting, challenging and/or rewarding.
- 5. Be Flexible.** Too often, people wait for the perfect time to make a change. For example if you've postponed getting more exercise, know that the it's unlikely the perfect time will ever come—and it won't last anyway—so make fitness fit into your life just the way it is today. When life gets in the way (and it will), adjust your routine so you can still fit it in.
- 6. Use Reminders.** Your motivation can fade simply because you've lost touch with why you wanted to change in the first place. Create reminders to keep your source of motivation top of mind. Some examples: If you're motivated to eat healthier because you want to inspire your children, have them draw a picture of you playing with them. If your goal is to be more active, set an alarm on your computer that reminds you to get up and walk around the office once every hour. If you want to eat more mindfully, make a poster to put on your refrigerator as a reminder: *Am I hungry? If not, then what I need is NOT in here!*
- 7. Anticipate Challenges.** Set yourself up for success by thinking through possible challenges and come up with

strategies ahead of time. When you make a mistake or get off track, consider it a learning opportunity. Take the feedback and create a plan for what you'll do differently when that challenge comes up again. For example, if you find you can't get yourself to the gym after you get home at night, take your exercise clothes to work with you.

- 8. Team Up.** When you're feeling low in motivation, you can borrow some from others around you. Find an accountability partner, exercise buddy, coach, personal trainer or support group.
- 9. Be Patient.** One of the things I hear most frequently from people I work with is that although it takes time, they eventually reach a point where eating mindfully or being more active becomes natural. You may not feel that way right away so you'll have to operate on faith that that it *will* get easier (unless you quit).
- 10. Reward Yourself.** Since it takes time to see results, come up with both small and large incentives to motivate yourself to reach your short and long term goals. For example, you could give yourself points for the minutes you spend exercising then trade them in for the time to do other things you enjoy too. And be sure to celebrate your success as you achieve the goals you've set.

Of course the greatest motivator is seeing the fruits of your labor – and the greatest reward is in knowing that you've done your best.

Michelle May, M.D. is a recovered yo-yo dieter and the award-winning author of *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat: How to Break Your Eat-Repent-Repeat Cycle*. Find additional articles and resources at <http://AmIHungry.com/>.