

Motivation: How do you get motivated?

I have an interesting relationship with my dentist, whom I have only known for about 2 years. We often discuss matters relating to fitness and on the occasion of my last visit the subject of *motivation* arose. He said that he had been a bit lacking in motivation lately and lamented that fact. So we engaged in an interesting discussion on how to re-dress the problem, I offered my thoughts on how to get things going and it led to the writing of this article.

Motivation has long been a subject of fascination of mine and the very task of getting to the dentist requires a serious degree of *motivation* as it's hardly ever a place one looks forward to visiting. Almost invariably it is expensive, sometimes painful, usually time consuming and often downright uncomfortable, possibly sitting for an extended period looking aimlessly at the roof with your mouth wide open.

But grudgingly we do it. Why? Perhaps because of the implied threat that if we don't look after our teeth, something resembling major trauma will possibly be the result, like a root canal or perhaps having some teeth pulled out.

So it is a form of "forced" motivation whereby there really is no reasonable alternative, thus with some anxiety we diligently head off to our pre-determined rendezvous.

(It must necessarily be said, at this point, I have an outstanding dentist who has a brand new facility, extolling the latest technologies, absolute cleanliness and delightful professionalism and punctuality.)

How does this lead back to fitness?

Firstly, the very task of getting fit, or getting into shape, seemingly mandates that you have the motivation to do so!

To get fit it is likely 3 major changes should occur:

- 1. The diet should likely change in terms of less is to be consumed**
- 2. It is likely the actual choice of what is consumed must also change (e.g. low fat, less simple carbohydrate, reduced consumption of alcohol.)**
- 3. A fitness program should be added, which should ideally be a structured resistance-training program.**

Getting "motivated" to do so is the challenge.

Nearly everybody you speak to can tell you about their failed attempt to get into shape. The point being that most people who start the fitness quest, usually peter out within 4-6 weeks.

The usual lament: "I just can't get going, I just can't be bothered."

Read; *Motivation is in short, perhaps non-existent, supply.*

The root cause of the problem is that it actually relates to *discipline* more than *motivation*, as I explained to my dentist. It seems people expect too much of fitness, or getting fit, they expect to automatically enjoy it and it should be fun! Let me say this very clearly, you *may* enjoy it at first, you *may* even enjoy it on an ongoing basis, but the chances are you will not!

There! Expectation set! First hurdle cleared!

Remember; if you have never enjoyed "getting fit" in the past, what makes you think it will be different this time around? (A definition of a fool is "somebody who thinks doing the same thing will result in a different outcome.") If you didn't like it first time around (or second, or third, etc.) you probably won't like it now, so change your expectations.

Furthermore, in my experience the fun component of fitness is INVERSELY related to getting results because training and getting fit comes down to outright hard work. Your body will not change unless it is subjected to something that is a challenge, as it is happy to maintain its present state. Something must be demanded of your muscles to force them to grow stronger/get fitter.

Lets revisit the dentist analogy. I trust that the reader can now see the link.

Getting fit can be compared to going to the dentist, it's not likely to be fun, it is a discipline, with the motivation being as real as a healthy mouth, teeth and gums, in that a healthy mind and body is sought. Interestingly, at least we don't expect the dentist to be fun. (Does that help us accept it?) But for some reason we expect getting fit to be! Which then explains the letdown and drop of in motivation. (The dentist we are more prepared to simply accept.)

The Secondary Consideration: Intensity of effort.

Objectively, the discipline is really the motivation; as the old Nike campaign said, "Just do it." Don't worry that you are not motivated, expect that often you won't be, most people simply are not! However, "book in the session" and just do it, no excuses, exercise for health is simply too important.

The deeper challenge is to then really put everything into your workout, capture the moment. If you bother to show up, bother to really put in! It is hard to be 100% all of the time. How can you do it?

It starts with an appreciation of what you are doing and why you are doing it.

We all hear stories about superhuman feats, when for example to save a child a person lifts a seemingly impossible weight to free them, or when "fear makes us superhuman.*" If one could take that sort of intensity to each resistance training session just imagine how much one's body would change over say 12 months time? Its unrealistic to think one can be that intense all the time but concentrating hard on your workout and having an understanding of what is possible and what is required, certainly helps. In a situation where one is trying to get the best results an experienced and knowledgeable person trainer or training partner is invaluable.

Fear can be a particularly potent form of motivation and to maximize one's "intensity of effort" (in particular the fear of failing.)

The best results come from simply accepting and then learning to embrace the discipline. That will in time lead to a distinctive form of internal motivation; i.e. "I don't want to miss a session," or " I really need to train" for example. As previously mentioned, having somebody to guide and in some cases assist you can certainly be of great advantage.

Motivation: So what is required?

Think first of the end goal.

Think second of what is required to achieve it.

Think third that it simply must be done.

Think fourth seriously do it as best you can. (Just before the workout.)

Remember one really must make each opportunity count, seriously aim to do your very best even if you don't feel much like training, don't make up excuses, just do it. I believe that the workouts people do that they would otherwise have baulked at, are the ones that clearly make the most difference to getting the best results.

Some of the most rewarding workouts I have ever done have been when I could so easily have not bothered to train and those are the critical ones that keep things moving in a positive direction. Even if you don't get as many repetitions, or are a little down on performance, do the session as well as you can on *that* occasion. It does not matter whether it's better or worse than the last workout, the overall trend will be positive; if you keep doing your best, keep *presenting*.

Ultimately the motivation really should be the end result (i.e. clean teeth, healthy body) each workout is a 1% step toward the health and fitness goal; so don't let any opportunities slip unnecessarily. (Serious illness or injury notwithstanding.)

Final comment: Keep the discipline! It all gets easier as the habit (and the acceptance of it) is formed and becomes the norm. Eventually the discipline becomes the motivation to the point where "to do or not to do" is no longer a consideration, it is now automatic, as you passionately pursue the end result.

- See <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/extreme-fear-superhuman/> as an example of an unexplained superhuman feat.