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**perfect fit**

**E**XERCISE adherence is one of the biggest problems most people face. People dodge an exercise programme or drop it for one of two main reasons: either they're unclear on their own goals and motivating factors, or they give in to hurdles that most regular exercisers are able to ride. These two are interrelated: it's easier to give in to barriers when you don't quite comprehend what the potential benefits are. To understand the same for starters, personal reflection is important. Planning and organization are the key factors to overcome these barriers. If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail!

Today's article will focus on understanding some of these external and internal blocks, and strategies to overcome them.

**External blocks** refer to obstacles, such as having to commute long distance to and from work, having multiple responsibilities such as a career, keeping house, managing kids, or being a single parent, and so on, or keeping long work hours. Internal blocks are basically a congregation of feelings, perceptions, notions and thoughts that people have about exercise and themselves.

#### External blocks

This refers to each person's environment and current life conditions. These blocks work from the outside in. These situations pose real time and convenience restrictions to people's ability to commit and stick to an exercise regimen.

Lower-income groups face more of these barriers than people of high-income groups do. Lower income groups tend to feel that fitness centres are too highly priced, and inconveniently situated, whereas those belonging to a high-income bracket do not tend to share these concerns. Culture has a huge influence on exercise and adherence to the same. As western culture continues to infiltrate Indian culture, this situation is improving. Exercise adherence can also vary depending on age. For instance, barriers for adults ranging from 60-78 tend to be injury and ill-health, whereas responsibilities towards children, lack of time and low motivation tend to be the main factors for adults from 20-40.

#### Internal blocks

Internal barriers greatly influence novices. These people have often never exercised before, but are thinking about it. They may have mildly dabbled with exercise in some small way. They find a train of excuses not to exercise regularly. Some of their barriers include self-consciousness with regard to body size, low self-esteem, intimidation and embarrassment.

#### Self-consciousness

This is a classic obstacle to embarking on a fitness programme. The paranoia is that others will evaluate one's body in a class or gym setting. This concern about visibility and judgement by others is often valid. Many people, particularly women, indicate that they would like to exercise in a setting with people who they consider non-judgmental.

#### Low self-esteem

Self-esteem can be defined as the degree to which an individual feels positive or negative about themselves. Each of us has a perception of ourselves which greatly reflects on our level of physical activity.

#### Intimidation and embarrassment

These are powerful forces, holding individuals back. Research shows that people would be more open to

joining fitness centres if they were less intimidated by those who "already belonged". It's important to take a beginner's class initially, and then work one's way up.

#### Stick to itiveness

Once you've overcome your blocks to this stage, the new level kicks into action. Today we'll focus on two of these blocks when it comes to sticking it out.

#### Result obsession

Benefits, such as getting rid of fat, are important for getting people interested in and starting an exercise programme. But to make exercise a part of one's lifestyle, one has to shift focus. One has to experience and perceive exercise as a positive, uplifting experience, with numerous benefits to offer, such as increased body tone and bone density, increased self-esteem, improved confidence and sleep, increased cardiovascular efficiency, among others. Otherwise, this is bound to be a short shift, and not a lifetime commitment.

This failure can easily lead to boredom and the reluctance to make the time for exercise.

#### Lack of time

This is often the No 1 reason cited for staying away from an exercise programme.

While time is often a legitimate barrier, it often is used to mask other concerns such as low self-esteem and intimidation.

#### Overcoming your blocks

Acute awareness of the above-mentioned problems, and changing our perception of both exercise and ourselves is the key to overcoming our blocks. Let's discuss some practical ways to help people change their mind about various exercise blocks.

To overcome intimidation, embarrassment and self-consciousness, here are ways to quickly get past these negative feelings.

Take on some guidance initially from your fitness centre. Meet the staff individually and speak to them freely about your concerns, problem areas, health status, etc. This way the staff will tune in to your specific needs and be able to give you more appropriate personal attention.

From time to time, review your exercise goals, and keep a track of your progress, whether it be fat loss and inch loss, increased muscle tone, or anything else, to help you stay motivated and on track.

Discuss with your trainer the one or two reasons that might keep you from exercising as frequently as you set out to do. Anticipating and discussing these problems will help you come up with strategies of preventing the same.

Take on the centre's free orientation programmes and informative lectures. Use these oppor-



#### Doing the stretch

tunities to freely discuss goal-getting, overcoming hurdles, and personal experiences of exercise.

Think about both your short and long-term goals, but don't dwell on them! Enjoy the experience of exercise itself. Feel good about committing to a programme, and making the time for the same.

Overload, to avoid plateauing. From time to time, once you have adapted to the exercise pro-

gramme, you will need to overload in order to see continuous progress. This could be done by increasing the intensity or duration of the workout, or by changing the type of activity performed.

Boredom is the No 1 killer of any exercise routine. You can easily avoid it by taking different class formats, or by using different exercise equipment. Not

only does novelty engage the mind and make the time pass quickly, but you'll take a leap on the progress scale.

Avoid facilities with mirrors just about everywhere! While the mirror is an important tool in checking one's body alignment and form, don't highlight your own physical anxiety by constantly glaring into it. Use it sparingly.

#### Time management

The research on the time barrier is clear: Most people who exercise regularly are as busy, and often busier, than those who are physically inactive.

Once you discover the value of physical exercise, it's less likely that you will use the "I don't have the time" excuse for not exercising.

As the saying goes, if you don't make time for exercise, then you'll have to make time for illness!

Just think of the amount of time that you spend each day by being physically inactive. How much time do you spend daily watching television?

Or being fixated in front of your computer monitor? Aren't we starting to lead sedentary lifestyles? What are we consciously doing to make up for this?

Integrate exercise with other basic requirements in life. Many people view exercise as separate from other aspects in life, such as social, intellectual, spiritual, and religious needs.

We should learn to take a more holistic approach, where all our needs, physical too, are balanced and interwoven with the next.

For instance, married couples can use exercise sessions to meet their physical requirements, while simultaneously bonding with their spouse. Mind-body classes, such as Pilate's, can help you explore your spiritual side while providing a great workout.

"True enjoyment from activity of the mind, exercise of the body: the two are united."

— Alexander Von Humboldt

Break through your barriers, and make exercise a lifetime commitment.

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One for the arms