

Staying Motivated to Exercise When It's Cold Outside



As the temperatures begin to fall, many people want to curl up on the couch to watch television or read a book. They don't want to think about having to exercise, especially if that means having to go out into the cold. There are many ways to stay motivated to exercise when it's cold outside. Keep reading to find the motivation you need.

If you enjoy walking, running, or bicycling as exercise, but don't want to get outdoors when it's 20 degrees, it's understandable. You can find the motivation to exercise during the winter months even if you don't want to go outside to do it. There are so many options from which to choose.

Why It's So Hard to Exercise

Perhaps you have set goals that are too big, or you chose the wrong type of exercise. Do you feel that you "must" exercise? These things may keep you from choosing to exercise during the winter months.

What type of exercise goals have you set for yourself? If you're just starting to incorporate exercise into your daily life, start with small goals. Setting goals that are too lofty, in the short-term, will cause you to become frustrated and more likely to quit because it will be difficult to reach your goals. Starting with smaller goals will help you to achieve some success. Then increase your goals again to a larger goal than your previous one, but one that is still attainable.

If your ultimate goal is to run a 26-mile marathon, it's unreasonable to think you'd be able to achieve that goal on the first day. It will take many, many weeks, possibly months, to work up to that goal. Instead of trying to run 26 miles on your first outing, plan to do something more reasonable. If you've never run before, it's important to begin running on a daily basis or at least on every other day basis. Before long, you'll be running further and further each day.

Weight lifting is a great exercise but lifting 100 pounds as a short-term goal is unreasonable and could be dangerous. If you've never lifted weights before and try to lift 100 pounds on your first day, you could easily injure yourself. Start with smaller goals – 50% less than what you believe you can lift – and do a few repetitions with that amount. Be sure your form is correct, and you'll be less likely to have an injury. After you've warmed up your muscles use the next higher weight. It may take you a couple of weeks to reach your goal of lifting 100 pounds but working up to it will reduce the chance of injury.

Is your chosen form of exercise something you can easily do during the winter months? Suppose you love rowing a boat during the warmer months of the year. Is it reasonable to continue rowing if the lake is frozen? If you started taking water skiing lessons during

the summer, certainly you won't want to continue getting out onto the water in a swimsuit when it's cold outside.

Think of some activities you can do in the winter that you've always wanted to learn or become better at doing. Perhaps you ice skated as a child. Even if you haven't laced up a pair of skates in years, now would be the perfect time to begin skating again. Have you ever wanted to learn to ski? If there's snow in your area – whether you're skiing cross country or downhill – take advantage of it. You may discover that you've found a new favorite winter activity!

Finally, change your mindset. Instead of telling yourself that you “have” to exercise during the colder months, convince yourself that you “get” to. You're healthy and able to move. Take advantage of the fact that you “can” do these activities. Many people would love to be able to take a walk outside or glide across an ice skating rink.

The most important way to stay motivated to exercise in the winter months is to find an activity that you enjoy and that you set reasonable goals for yourself. After you have your mind made up to keep moving when it's colder outdoors, have set reasonable goals that are easy to reach, and have chosen the activity that will keep you moving and warm, you may find that motivation isn't as difficult to find as you thought.

Motivation Comes from Within

Most people who struggle with remaining active during the colder months may not realize that motivation to continue comes from within. Why do you want to exercise? If you know why – and those reasons are strong enough – maintaining motivation may come easier.

Do you want to lose weight? Most doctors, weight loss experts, and those who have successfully lost and kept weight off will tell you that you need to be active to lose weight. Why do you want to lose weight? Knowing why you want to lose weight can be a source of inspiration to keep exercising on its own.

Your doctor has told you that you're carrying too much weight. The extra weight, if left, could cause some health issues you'd rather not deal with. Diabetes, heart disease, and other illnesses are exacerbated by carrying extra weight. Increasing your activity level can help you shed the pounds and help you firm up. It can also help you avoid some of the health issues that so often plague people who are overweight or not active.

Most women do not realize that their weight can be the cause of fertility issues. In fact, thirty percent of all fertility problems are related to the woman's weight – whether the woman is overweight or underweight. Losing even 5 percent of their bodyweight can enhance their fertility and chance of conceiving. It's also important to realize that not being active can also affect fertility, not only for the woman, but for the man as well.

Women can, according to research done recently, decrease their ovulatory infertility by 5% by exercising vigorously for each hour per week that they exercise vigorously. Men also benefit from being physically active. The British Journal of Sports Medicine reported that men who do 15 or more hours of moderate exercise each week will have higher sperm counts. So, if you're trying to have children but have been unsuccessful at getting pregnant, lack of physical exercise could partially be the issue. Of course, you'll want to discuss this with your own doctor to confirm their suggestions.

Your high school reunion is four months away. Over the years, you have added a few pounds. Your best friend is getting married in the spring and she has asked you to be her bridesmaid. If you want to lose weight for a specific event, it can be motivation. Regularly being active, regardless of the activity, can help you shed the pounds. It can also improve your mood because of the endorphins that exercise releases.

There are many reasons why people want to lose weight including a specific event they want to attend and look their best, improving their overall health, combatting a particular health issue, or because they want to have children. No matter what your reason is, know WHY you want to lose weight, and become or continue to be more physically active, will help you achieve the motivation you need to keep exercising even when the cold winds blow.

Finding the Right Exercises for You

The same exercise that is right for your friends, your family, or your partner is not necessarily going to be the right exercise for you. How do you find the right exercise? Below are some questions you can ask yourself which may help you find the exercise program that's right for you.

1. **Have you determined what your fitness goals are?** If not, consider this question – what is it that you want to achieve with your exercise program? Do you want to feel great and look good in your own skin? Has your doctor told you that you need to become more active? Do you want to find an exercise program you won't hate? The above three questions will help you express your fitness goals. Remember, you can get healthier by exercising consistently 30 minutes a day than you can by exercising for two hours once a week. Find something that is easy to incorporate into your day and you'll be most likely to stick to it.
2. **Is your goal to train your muscles or train your entire body?** Many people focus primarily on training their muscles (legs, arms, and heart) but they may neglect the remaining part of their body. The other things to consider when exercising include training your breathing, working to keep your joints healthy, enhancing coordination, increasing circulation, and maintaining balance. Your

body is more than simply muscles. It is important to train your whole body with the exercise to enable you to reach your long-term fitness goals.

3. **What exercise program fits best with your schedule?** If you're a busy person – parent, spouse, caregiver, employee, or any number of hats you may wear – you may feel like you don't have time to exercise. If you don't have time to spend an hour or two a day at a gym, you can also exercise at home. If you hate to exercise alone, ask a friend or family member to exercise with you. Remember, the goal of exercising is to reduce stress rather than creating stress for you. Choose something you can do without having to leave your home and travel to get there.
4. **Does the exercise program have more than one benefit associated with it?** People who practice Tai Chi understand that the activity trains their joints as well as encourages balance. Those who practice Yoga realize it helps train the body and the mind simultaneously. Anyone who enjoys CrossFit understands that they are increasing strength and agility at the same time. If you can find an activity that accomplishes more than one thing at a time, give it a try. You may find you enjoy the varied benefits.
5. **Will your exercise program carry over into your every day life?** If your job requires you to move heavy items, a weight lifting program might be best for you. However, if you sit behind a desk all day, unless you enjoy pushing weights, you probably don't need to focus on that exercise. The goal is to find an exercise that you will enjoy doing, and that is important to you, for now and into the future. The more important it is for you, personally, the more likely you will continue it.
6. **Are some physical activities difficult for you or has your doctor suggested you avoid them?** If you have had heart surgery, it is unlikely the doctor is going to suggest that you start training for a marathon. If you've had knee surgery, rowing a boat will likely cause stress or injury to your knees. Walking is one of the least jarring exercises and it is something you do throughout your day. Adding a short walk in the evening might be a good option for you if you have health issues.

If you're a social person, it is unlikely that you will enjoy exercises that keep you away from other people. Taking an exercise class with a friend will help you be social as well as help you continue to exercise. If you'd rather be alone after a long, hard day at work, being in an exercise class probably isn't going to work for you. You may prefer a quiet exercise like swimming or yoga where it is quiet and there aren't a lot of people around.

The Importance of Setting Goals

Some people don't plan when it comes to exercising. This may be part of the reason they don't continue exercising once winter comes. They have failed to plan, haven't set any goals, and simply stop. If you're serious about your health, however, it is important to exercise all year round even if you change the type of exercise you do.

How do you set goals when they relate to exercise? Honestly, the process of setting exercise goals isn't any different than decluttering your house or starting a business. There is an acronym that you can use for creating goals – one that is useful for anything you are setting goals for – S.M.A.R.T.

S – The S in the acronym is for Specific. Setting a specific goal gives you a better chance at reaching it than a general goal. A specific will answer some “W” questions:

1. Who will be involved?
2. What will I accomplish?
3. Where will I exercise?
4. When will I exercise and for how long?
5. Which items will I need to reach my goal?
6. Why am I doing this?

A general goal would be “I plan to exercise during the winter months.” A specific goal, however, would be something like, “Mary and I will get together three times a week during the winter months at my apartment to exercise with a video for an hour each time we meet so we both can lose weight and get healthy for our high school reunion in June.” You can see that each of the “W” questions was answered. Perhaps your goal isn't spelled out in that much detail, but you still want to be specific about what you will be doing, for how long, and what you hope to accomplish.

M – The M in the acronym is for Measurable. You want to establish concrete ways to measure whether you're making progress toward your ultimate goal. In the case of exercise, a measurable goal would be taking physical measurements of your body once a week. If you are exercising regularly during the winter months, instead of adding inches, you should be taking them off.

Using a measurable goal will help you document your progress, stay on track, reach any target dates you made, and know when you've reached your goal. You can determine if your goal is measurable by asking how much or how many? How will you know if you've reached your goal?

A – The A in the acronym is for Attainable. Have you identified what is the most important to you? When you do, you'll most likely figure out ways you can to make sure

you succeed. You will find ways to adjust your mindset, learn new skills, or find new things to help you reach your goals. You may begin to realize there are some things you've been doing that hinder your goals.

Set smaller goals that you will be able to reach. Since winter generally lasts about three months, you don't have to plan for an entire year's worth of exercise. Choose goals that are shorter in length – "I will exercise three days a week during the winter months." Plan your exercise steps carefully and you will likely be able to reach your goals. Writing your goals out will help build your self-image. You will learn to see yourself as being worthy of the goals, and you will begin to develop the traits which will allow you to attain the goals.

R – The R in the acronym is for Realistic. If you choose a goal that is not realistic – "I will lift 250 pounds after my first week lifting weights" – it is likely you will not be willing or able to reach it. However, if you choose one that you can actually reach – "I will lift 5 or 10 pounds of weight for my first week of weightlifting" – it is something you will be able to reach. You also want to consider whether the goal is too easy. If you have never lifted weights before, lifting 5 or 10 pounds may seem difficult. But if you have lifted weights in the past and stopped, lifting 5 or 10 pounds may seem simple. You want to be sure that each goal you make is something that moves you forward.

T – The T in the S.M.A.R.T. acronym stands for Timely. Each goal you set should have a time frame surrounding it. If you don't give yourself a time frame under which you plan to reach your goal, you may not have the self-determination to continue. For instance, if you want to lose 15 pounds but don't say when you want to lose the weight by, you won't have as much of a chance to lose the weight as if you say I will lose 15 pounds by June 10th. Setting a specific date helps to anchor your desire and sets your unconscious mind to begin working on the goal to achieve it.

The letter T in the acronym could also stand for Tangible. A tangible goal is one that you experience with one or more of your senses – sight, sound, touch, smell, or taste. Having a tangible goal will also be easier to make the goal specific and measurable, increasing your chance of success.

When you consider your goals and choose ones that use one or more of the S.M.A.R.T. letters, be sure to write your goals down. You may also want to ask a friend or family member to help hold you accountable. With their encouragement, and specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely goals, you will soon see the results you want to achieve during the winter months. And, as an added benefit, when the weather begins to warm up and it's time for shorts and bathing suits, you won't feel so bad about how you look. You'll also be closer to your ultimate goal of being healthy and fit.

Certain Foods Can Motivate You

You may be surprised to learn that some foods actually CAN help motivate you. The foods you eat, whether healthy and wholesome or processed and chemical-laden, can make a difference in your motivation, particularly if you are trying to become healthier.

An added benefit to eating the foods in the list below, besides helping to motivate or keep you motivated, is that they also help you control stress, fight anxiety and depression, and increase your ability to focus.

- **TUNA** – This fish can help you fight depression during the colder months because it provides vitamin B6. And, since it's unlikely you'll feel much like doing anything when you're depressed, increasing how much tuna you eat, particularly during the colder months, can help combat depression. According to many research reports, Tuna has 69% of your daily requirement of vitamin B6. Some research also indicates that you can also treat, and possibly prevent, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) with vitamin B6 which can affect being able to focus or stay on task.
- **SPINACH** – Harvard Medical School research indicates that spinach, or other leafy green vegetables, reduces the rate of cognitive decline or the speed at which the brain functions. Eating spinach also improves the ability to learn and a person's motor skills.
- **WHOLE GRAINS** – Whole grains contain vitamin B, or folate. This vitamin boosts the flow of blood to the brain. It can also be used to treat short-term depression.
- **BLUEBERRIES** – Not only can blueberries help improve focus and engagement, but they can also help motivate you to lose weight. A recent study showed that people eating a cup of blueberries each day for two weeks scored higher on classroom tests over those who didn't eat them. It is believed the reason for the improvement is because brain cells in the hippocampus region of the brain increased while eating the blueberries.
- **PECANS** – Choline, found in pecans, can assist with memory, depression, and fatigue following working out. It can also improve brain development. Recent studies show that taking 2.8 grams of choline before a race helped athletes run faster when compared to not taking choline.
- **SUNFLOWER SEEDS** – Not being able to sleep and depression are major roadblocks to becoming or remaining motivated. Eating a handful of sunflower

seeds can help fight both of these issues. The seeds contain tryptophan which is converted to serotonin in the brain.

- **GREEK YOGURT** – The brain uses neurotransmitters to mobilize the brain and ready the body for action. Yogurt contains the compound tyrosine which is an amino acid producing both noradrenalin and dopamine. Greek yogurt also builds muscles and contains calcium which helps nerves function better.
- **FLAXSEED** – Flaxseeds contain alpha-linolenic acid which is a healthy fat used for improving how the cerebral cortex functions. The cerebral cortex processes sensory information. So, if you add flaxseeds to your pancakes or a smoothie, they will help you reach your goals.
- **GREEN TEA** – This beverage can help you attack your goals when it is time to do so as well as help you to step back and regroup because it has catechins which allow you to chill out mentally. It can also help you maintain an outlook that is positive, enhance your memory, boost your ability to focus, and combat mental fatigue.
- **GRASS-FED BEEF** – Having a healthy iron level will help people perform better on mental tasks as well as complete them faster. Grass-fed beef is high in iron as well as being lower in calories. You also don't have worry about artificial hormones with grass-fed beef.
- **KALE** – Manganese, a superfood found in kale, increases the brain's function as well as increasing concentration. You'll also find the amino acids necessary for better alertness and mood in kale. You may also be surprised to learn that kale contains 1180% of your recommended daily allowance of vitamin K which is necessary to reduce mental decline.
- **WALNUTS** – Walnuts contain omega-3 fatty acids provide fuel for the brain and helps increase serotonin levels in the brain. Appetites and mood are controlled by serotonin so eating walnuts regularly can help you stop binging on foods that are bad for you, help you sleep better, overcome depression symptoms, reduce your desire to overeat, and overcome compulsive behaviors.
- **PUMPKIN SEEDS** – Even though they are small, pumpkin seeds contain your full day's requirement of zinc. Zinc is helpful for the memory and keeping thinking skills healthy. When you're alert, you can handle whatever life throws at you.

- **COFFEE** – Although coffee contains caffeine, it also increases the amount of dopamine in your brain. Dopamine allows you to plan ahead, as well as resist any unhealthy impulses which could keep you from reaching your goals.
- **DARK CHOCOLATE** – Most people like chocolate, but dark chocolate (bars that are 70% or more cacao) is actually healthy for you. It can reduce the chance of developing cancer as well as promote weight loss. It also improves the production of endorphins and serotonin in the brain. On top of that, dopamine is also released which makes you feel good as it increases focus and concentration. What's even more surprising is that you don't need to eat an entire bar of chocolate. A small square is all you need.
- **WATER** – If you're dehydrated, it is difficult to function properly. Since the body is more than 73% water, it's important to drink enough fluids. Being dehydrated can impair your ability to gain knowledge or understand. It can also cause you to become lethargic, distracted, and irritable.

Foods that May Hinder Your Motivation

Eating healthy foods can do much in the way of building up motivation for continuing to exercise during the winter months or losing weight. In the same way, not eating healthy foods can adversely affect your motivation.

Everyone knows that eating junk food can make you feel inactive. When you feel inactive, you're not likely to get up and exercise. Stay away from processed foods and eat more foods as close to nature as you can. This doesn't mean you have to become a vegetarian, but you do want to increase the amount of fresh foods even during the colder months.

Eating too many sweets and processed foods can lead to lethargy. When you're lethargic, the last thing you want to do is exercise. That is partly why people gain so much weight during the colder months. The downward slide begins around the end of October and continues until the first of the year. That's when people realize they've let themselves go and decide to make a New Year's resolution to get into shape and lose weight.

Unfortunately, after several months of eating all of the holiday goodies, you may find that your motivation is gone. Finding it again could be difficult. When you come to think about it, isn't it really better to avoid the holiday weight gain in the first place by eating healthy foods that build your motivation rather than hinder it?

This doesn't mean you can't eat any sweets or processed foods during the winter months. Rather than eating one of every type of candy the kids have brought home, or

you have purchased to hand out, allow yourself to have one item. You could probably even eat one piece of candy a day . . . as long as all you eat is one. Consider hiding the candy in the cabinet to keep it out of sight. Remember the old adage “out of sight, out of mind” to help you, and the rest of your family, avoid over indulging in the Halloween candy.

As if Halloween wasn’t bad enough, a month later is Thanksgiving. Most Thanksgiving dinners include turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, candied sweet potatoes, green bean casserole, either corn bread or rolls (or both), and cranberry sauce. Of course, each family is different, so there may be other food items on the Thanksgiving menu. And, after everyone has stuffed themselves on the main meal, there’s usually several desserts to choose from – pumpkin pie, pecan pie, apple pie, some type of cake, cookies of different varieties, and more. Instead of filling your plate, and succumbing to the after Thanksgiving dinner sleepiness, take one small serving of your favorite dessert.

If you start feeling sleepy after your meal, take some time and take a walk outside. Not only will the activity help you work off some of the food you just ate, it will provide some energy to stay awake.

A month later is Christmas. It’s filled with cookies, candies, fudge, pies, cakes, and all sorts of other foods that you may not eat during the remainder of the year. Rather than packing on the pounds, get out of the house and away from the food. Take a brisk walk outside, or if the weather is too cold for you, head to the shopping mall. You don’t have to buy anything while you’re there, but you can walk around and try to avoid the holiday shoppers. You’ll be away from the food and moving, which is one way to avoid adding any weight leading up to Christmas day.

The problem with having so many sweets and carbohydrate laden foods available, other than the added calories, is that the sweets reduce your desire to become more active. Doing your best to avoid these foods will help you stay motivated to be active. Being more active will help you to keep the weight off leading up to New Year’s Eve.

Staying Focused

When you set health and fitness goals, you want to stay focused, so you can remain motivated enough to achieve them. Below are some guidelines to help you reach the goals you have set.

- Short-term goals of no more than 8 weeks are easier to reach than long-term goals. As was stated above, the goals should follow the S.M.A.R.T. acronym.

- Set specific small goals that you can accomplish in a short period. Deciding to do 10 sit ups, 25 pushups, or yoga for 15 minutes may not seem like much, but any activity you can begin and be consistent with can encourage you to get moving. Be sure to write your goals down on your calendar or place notes around the house to remind yourself. You don't have to be perfect at doing these activities each day but having the visual reminder can help you to be better at staying active during the winter.
- If you have a daily calendar that you record dates, appointments, and important family dates. Your health should be very important, and exercising is one thing you can do to improve your health. Decide when you want to exercise and mark that time as busy on your calendar. Make a date with yourself for your health. When you see the time blocked off, it will help you to stay focused on your exercise goals, so you will achieve them.
- Tear down any mental walls you have built up which will keep you from exercising. You don't have to be hard on yourself
- Focus on the positive things that you CAN do rather than focusing on the things that you can't. Even though you may want to remain in bed with the covers pulled up tightly, you know you will feel better after you've gotten up and gotten moving. Remaining positive increases your motivation and helps to keep you on track to success.
- Add a new activity or different exercise each week to keep you from getting bored. Once you become bored, you are less likely to want to continue doing it. If you challenge yourself to try something new each week while you exercise – adding a new exercise, changing the route you travel while running, head out to the gym at a different time, ask a friend to join you, or wear new exercise clothes. Whatever you can do to make your routine a little different each week will encourage you to keep exercising.
- If there is a fun run or other event that you can train for, it could be just the ticket to keep you motivated during the winter. A new activity can be a challenge, but it can also be what is needed to keep you motivated until the warmer weather returns.
- Ask a friend to hold you accountable for exercising. Or ask them to join you and you can hold each other accountable. A friend is more likely to tell you that you're slacking off if you feel like giving up, especially if they're exercising with you. Having accountability, as well as an exercise partner, can be just the motivation

you need to keep exercising. Competition with your friend can also help to motivate you.

- Find a routine you can do at home, and actually enjoy doing it. You can find work out videos online that don't cost any money, so you can follow along. If you do the work out for a couple of days and decide it's not for you, you haven't lost any money. You can simply search to find another work out video. With all of the videos there are available, you can surely find a video that you can do at home, no matter what time of the day or night you are able to exercise.
- If you're serious about getting active during the winter months, you may want to put your money toward your goals. Once you have a financial investment in your health and wellness, you are more likely to remain focused, so you don't waste your money.
- Find and join a fitness challenge in your area. If you can't find one locally, many websites and blogs offer challenges throughout the year. And, since people often complain about gaining weight during the winter months, there is certain to be one or more offered during this time. You can also start a challenge with a group of your friends or ask a local gym if you can organize a challenge at their location. A challenge, with friends or people you don't know, can be something to help you stay focused on your health goals during the colder months.

What to Do If You Fall Off the Fitness Wagon

You have been consistent with your exercise routine for months, and then the temperatures plummet, there are wind chills making the temperatures feel like it's well below zero, and there's a combination of rain, sleet, and snow expected for two to three months. And to make matters worse, you've got a cold. You don't want to get up to exercise. It's too cold outside. So, you don't exercise for a day, then two days, then a week. Before long, you've fallen completely off the fitness wagon.

Even if it has been a week or more since you last exercised, not all hope is lost. You have a choice to make:

1. Simply stop exercising and lose all benefits that you had gained from your previous work.
2. Accept the fact that you're not perfect and decide to get back on track?

Let's look at each of these choices a little closer.

Stop Exercising

This may be the easier choice to make, but you know it is not the best choice. In fact, if you've been exercising for very long, many of the benefits you had gained from being active will begin to disappear within the first two weeks. Below are things you can expect to happen if you chose to stop exercising.

- The brain may be the first thing affected when you stop exercising. A recent study found that short breaks can cause changes to the brain in as little as ten days. The hippocampus, where memory and emotion are associated, receives less blood flow.
- It will be easier to become winded. Within 14 days, you may find you become winded when climbing stairs whereas in the past you could climb easily. The maximum amount of oxygen (VO2 max) your body can use decreases by 10% after as little as two weeks. If you stop exercising for four weeks, the VO2 max could drop by 15% or 20% if you stop for three months.
- Blood pressure and blood glucose levels may also rise sharply within the same two week period. You may see your blood pressure return to what it was before you began exercising.
- After not exercising for four weeks, you may notice you're not as strong as you were. You may notice a change after two weeks, but after four weeks, the change will be more noticeable.
- Six to eight weeks after you stop exercising, your body will begin gaining fat. After five weeks, competitive swimmers who took a break noticed a 12% increase in body fat as well as seeing an increase their waist and body weight.

As you can see, if you've made improvements to your health by exercising, those improvements will begin to disappear.

Begin Again

If you've fallen off the wagon as far as fitness is concerned, don't wait until tomorrow to get moving. Start today and start with a small activity to move you forward. If it's been weeks since you've exercised, you're not going to be at the same level as when you stopped. Trying to pick up right where you left off could cause injury. Start slow and build up to where you were.

- The Law of Inertia states that a body at rest tends to stay at rest and a body in motion tends to stay in motion. Get moving and it will be easier to stay moving. Do something, it doesn't matter what, as long as you are moving.

- Start with short workouts – even five or ten minutes at a time – are better than nothing when it's been a while since you've exercised. Not only will you be moving toward your goals again, exercising will actually help your body warm up, so you don't feel the cold as easily.
- Tell a friend that you trust that you need their help to get back on the exercise track. Be specific about how what you'd like to accomplish. "I will exercise Monday, Wednesday, and Friday by walking for 30 minutes." It's a good chance they may feel the need to exercise as well. Confiding in a friend can help you be honest with yourself and will make you feel better.
- Enlist a friend. Like almost everything in life, exercising is more fun with someone you enjoy being with. They can encourage you and can encourage them. It's a win-win arrangement.
- Take a hike – or a walk around the block – even if it is colder outside. You don't have to run or drive to a gym if it seems too difficult. Simply getting outdoors and walking can be some of the best exercise for colder months.
- Instead of taking the elevator at work, take the stairs. If you can't walk up multiple flights of stairs your first day, take one flight and then ride the elevator the remainder of the way up.
- Act like a child and play! Children don't think of playing as exercise, they simply see it as having fun. You can do the same thing. Try to find fun things you can do that will also get you moving. There are many activities and sports you can try that will bring fun back to getting fit.
- Find some energetic music that makes you want to move. So much upbeat music available will encourage you to exercise.
- Block out your exercise time on your calendar and guard that time. Turn your phone off so you won't be interrupted by alerts.
- Dress warmly and go outside to exercise. You don't have to freeze while exercising in colder weather. Today's exercise wear is so versatile today and there is so much to choose from. Get the gear that you will need for whatever weather your area experiences during the winter. Be sure to get waterproof outer clothing so you won't get soaked to the bones if it starts raining.

It is not uncommon for physically active people to slow down or stop exercising during the colder months. The lower temperatures and shorter days often make your metabolism slow down which makes being active more difficult. You don't have to lose your motivation and give up exercising during these months.

You can remain active during the winter months even if you want to crawl under the covers to get warm. Set some S.M.A.R.T. goals, enlist the help of a friend, try new activities, and get moving. You know you will feel better which will motivate you to keep going.