



Vary your training for maximum motivation

The word 'motivation' is often used to describe certain sorts of behaviour. An athlete who trains hard and tries for personal bests may be described as being 'highly motivated', while someone who says they find it difficult to exercise, get fit or lose weight could be considered 'unmotivated'. Such statements suggest that motivation has a major influence on our behaviour, but what is motivation really?

WHAT IS MOTIVATION?

Motivation can be defined as the factors within us that arouse, maintain and channel our behaviour towards achieving a goal. To put simply, motivation is goal-directed behaviour.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

A good step towards understanding what motivates you to exercise is to ask yourself, 'What do I want to achieve?' You might answer, 'improved fitness', 'weight loss' or 'an Olympic gold medal.' As we are all motivated by different things your answer will depend on your individual values and beliefs. Therefore, the key to adhering to your exercise program is to involve the factors that motivate you. For example, many swimmers are motivated by achieving a personal best time as opposed to winning the race; even though at the top level of competition, in many instances achieving a personal best time will win the race as well! Given this motivation, training tends to involve time-orientated goals, such as covering a specific distance in a certain time.

HOW CAN YOU REMAIN MOTIVATED TO EXERCISE?

An effective method for remaining motivated is to include variety in what you do. In training for my third Olympics, I integrated weight training and not only did I feel more motivated because I was doing something other than swimming, but the strength training also significantly improved my performance.

Achieving results, such as not puffing after climbing stairs or feeling your body shape change, is extremely motivating in itself. Interestingly, if you train the same way for a long time, without adding any variation to your program, your results will eventually plateau. For example, if you constantly follow the same weight training program, you will eventually reach a point where you will no longer experience changes in your physical strength or size. It will depend on how quickly your body adapts to exercise as to how long it takes to reach this plateau, but in order to avoid it occurring you should change your training program at least every six weeks or so. This may mean altering activities or changing the intensity at which you train. Variation in your training intensity can help you achieve your fitness goals more quickly. One way to do this is to cycle your training. Here's an example of how this can be done:

Phase	Duration	Aim	Training method
1	4 weeks	Adaption	Train all muscle groups using light weights, high repetitions and minimum rest between sets (e.g., circuit training for 30 minutes).
2	4 weeks	Muscle	Calculate your maximum weight for repetition (1RM) for different muscle groups (e.g., bench press, leg press, etc). 1st week: 12 reps using 50% of weight lifted for 1RM in phase 2 to allow the muscles and joints to adapt. Progressively increase weight lifted so that by 4th week: 12 reps using 65% of weight lifted for 1RM.
3	4 weeks	Strength	Less repetitions and longer recovery periods (e.g., 3-5 sets of 8-10 reps) lifting 65-80% of 1RM maximum with 60-120 seconds rest between sets.
4	4 weeks	Power	Weight being lifted is 85-95% of 1RM for only 2-6 repetitions with maximum recovery of 3 minutes or more between sets. Note: you may feel ready to go earlier but your nervous system may not be, so be patient, stretch, drink water or strengthen your abdominals between

As you begin to lift more weight, the longer your recovery periods between sets and training sessions should be. Core work such as abdominal training and technique work can be undertaken between heavier sessions to improve your foundation. By reaching phase 4 you are maintaining the strength you have built, so when returning to phase 2, the weight for your 1RM will be greater. By continually cycling your training you will avoid that plateau by keeping your body stimulated and continue to see results both physically (e.g., increased strength and muscle) and emotionally (e.g., increased self confidence), which will keep you highly motivated.

When I'm on the blocks and ready to race, my motivation becomes knowing that my training has successfully prepared me for competition. By ensuring your training program is varied, you too can keep achieving personal bests and remain motivated for years to come! Good luck!

By Kieren Perkins, OAM

Kieren Perkins, Australia's 1,500m Olympic swimming champion, is one of many high profile athletes who are part of a new online coaching team called FitSmart. FitSmart provides personalised fitness, strength and sports specific training programs, written by some of Australia's leading sports stars such as Guy Leech, Layne Beachley, Sandon Stolle & Greg Welch. To find out more go to www.fitsmart.com



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