

The eternal question: Work out or sleep in?

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There are many people who commit to exercising and really stick to their plan. There are probably just as many others who start out with good intentions but can't seem to stay motivated.

You've likely heard all the reasons why exercise is good for you. It can help with physical and mental wellbeing, stress control, weight management and more.

Yet there's a gap between knowing and doing. And another gap between doing and "keep on doing." After the initial inspiration wears off, it can be tough to maintain the routine.

Excuses, excuses

We're all familiar with the many reasons we "can't" work out right now. Maybe you've said something like this at one time or another:

- It's too hot, cold, windy, dry or humid
- I didn't sleep well or I overslept
- I'll exercise at lunch or after work

Sometimes you can make it all the way to lacing up your sneakers and still get a last minute pang of "do I really have to?" So what's a person to do?

Four things to tell yourself

Here are four good messages to give yourself about working out¹:

1. Focus on the feeling. Do you feel stronger after you work out? Happier? More energized? Mentally clearer? Proud of yourself? Knowing you're going to "earn" these good feelings can help motivate you more than stressing about your looks or how much weight you need to lose.

2. Do it before you have time to think about it. If you can exercise in the morning, it eliminates excuses later in the day. Plus, if you just get up and do your workout, you'll be doing it before your brain even realizes it or has time to think up excuses.

3. Treat yourself to workout clothes. Dress for the occasion. Having a nice outfit or two for your workout can boost your self-confidence. Just putting on your exercise garb can get you mentally into "the zone" for a great workout.

4. Consider it an appointment. Don't think of exercise as optional. Think of it as an appointment. Bring the same sense of responsibility you apply to meetings and appointments to help stick to your exercise routine.

Exercise: It's a mind game

When all is said and done, exercise is really a brain game. If maintaining motivation is a problem for you, mind games can really help.

Consider exercise as a habit you have to keep up and give yourself the messages above. In other words, will yourself to do it.

Once you get moving, your body will produce "feel good" endorphins.¹ Who knows? You may even start looking forward to working out.

¹www.nj.com/starledger