

Motivation for Change

By Jayme Green, BS, ACE
Nimkee Fitness Coordinator

“I really should go to the gym.” “I really need to eat healthier.” No doubt you have either said or heard these statements before. With the knowledge we have about heart disease, cancer, quality of life and all the benefits of physical activity, we have a desire to watch what we eat and exercise; except it is so hard to follow through on that quiet desire. What can help is motivation. Motivation is defined as the process that initiates, guides and maintains goal oriented behaviors. Motivation is what causes us to act. It involves the biological, emotional, social, and cognitive forces that activate behavior. So how can we break our existing habits with motivation to fulfill our quiet desire to be healthier?

As stated earlier, motivation causes us to act. It is a mixture of biological, emotional, social and cognitive forces. It would make sense then that what would motivate one person would not necessarily motivate a different person. To understand what inspires you personally, you would have to look inward. Think about whom you are and how you grew up. Did you grow up around physically active people or were you surrounded by sweets and physical inactivity? Are the people you surround yourself with encouraging healthy habits? Emotion has a lot to do with action. A person may be motivated to quit smoking after watching a loved one suffer and pass from lung cancer. Or an individual may continue running to help keep their emotions in check (physical activity simply makes you feel better).

It is also important to set goals; a short term and a long term goal. Whether the goal is to make it into the gym at least 2 times a week or to drink an extra glass of water a day, it is central to making changes in your life. An example of a long term goal is to drop a pant size six months from now or drinking only 1 glass of pop a day for the next 6-12 months. Just make sure the goals are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Making the goals visible may also help you find the motivation to succeed. Try writing your goals down and posting them on the refrigerator. Or, let friends and family know of your goals as an accountability motivator.

Once you have been motivated to act a couple times and have reached your short term goals, are you done? No, motivation is a constant work in process. There will be days when you will have to find a different motivational approach to achieve your goals. After you have reached your goals, you can set new ones. If you would like ideas or motivational support, you can always come to The Nimkee Fitness Center and talk with one of our four personal trainers. Hope to see you soon!