

# Finding motivation to move off the couch

*The couchsurfing lifestyle may beckon, but following a simple plan could get you in shape*

BY JULIETTA LOEFFLER

The biggest problem that both new and experienced exercisers have is motivating themselves to start and keep moving. Once you have made up your mind to exercise, you still have to overcome the biggest barrier — getting started, keeping focussed and staying consistent.

Although motivation comes from within an individual, there are many ways to boost one's motivation and create a rewarding experience. Eventually physical activity will become second nature and you will not think twice about

working up a good sweat.

A useful motivational tool is a personal journal. In it you can record the day you exercise, what activity you participated in and for how long. You should write down one sentence on how you felt before and after your workout. This will help you see the improvements in your mood and other mental benefits. This sentence will help you keep track of your progress.

And progress is the key to staying inspired. It is easy to see improvements in your overall health, your level of physical activity and your mental well-being if you set goals.

First, set a long-term goal (for example, running for 40 minutes), then break the long term goal into many short term goals (run 10 minutes in two weeks, 15 minutes in four weeks, 20 minutes in six weeks and so on). This goal setting is useful for weight training, building aerobic capacity and improving self-esteem.

Many people make weight loss their long-term goal. Rather than focussing on an ideal weight as a goal, it would be better to concentrate on how you feel. By using weight as a way to measure progress, you may never see a noticeable difference. A number

does not define who you are and how you feel — only you can do that for yourself.

Exercising with a partner is extremely helpful in staying motivated. It is easier to stick to a schedule if you know that by not working out you may be letting someone down. Partners can help you stick to a workout time and make you push harder while engaging in physical activity.

Whenever you reach your goal or have stuck to your exercise plan for a set amount of time, reward yourself in whatever way you see fit — as long as it is something that makes you happy and keeps you wanting to go back to the gym for more.

The best part about participating in physical activity is the fun that you can have doing it.

The key is looking for activities you really enjoy — for example, basketball, volleyball or football; or try something completely different, such as rock climbing.

Everyone has what it takes to



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make physical activity part of his or her life, and you do too.

*Julietta Loeffler is a contributing writer with the Queen's Journal in Kingston, Ontario.*

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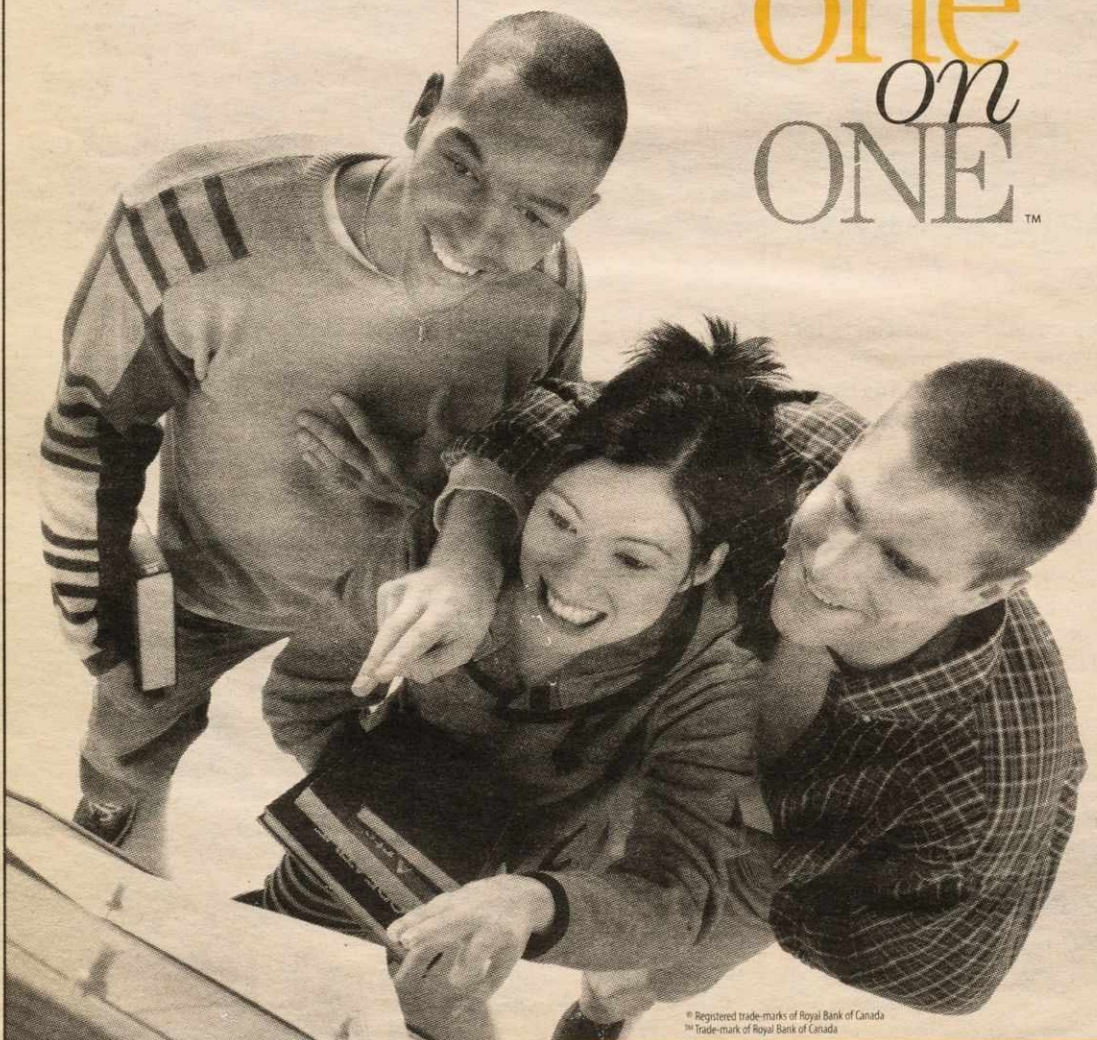
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