

C25K Week 8: Motivation

Congratulations! You just completed the Couch to 5k 8-week program. What an accomplishment! Now what? How do you stay motivated to keep maintaining your healthy habits when you have already accomplished reaching your main goal?

Motivation is never static. It varies and shifts, over a month or a week or even during the course of a single day. Encouraging yourself to adopt specific strategies to boost motivation gives you resources to help stay focused on your goals, even when intrinsic motivation is flagging. It is a good idea to develop a collection of motivational tactics, including:

1. [Create a SMART Goal](#). SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.
 - a. **Specific:** Well defined, clear, and unambiguous
 - b. **Measurable:** With specific criteria that measure your progress towards the accomplishment of the goal
 - c. **Achievable:** Attainable and not impossible to achieve
 - d. **Realistic:** Within reach, realistic, and relevant to your purpose
 - e. **Timely:** With a clearly defined timeline, including a starting date and a target date. The purpose is to create urgency.



2. Write down the reason why you began this journey in the first place. Write it on a white board or sticky note, and place it somewhere that you see every day. Let that be a reminder to you to keep going until you reach your goal. If you already met your goal, how can you go above and beyond to reach another goal?

In our busy, distracting world, it is easy to get blown off course. This is why you need to ground yourself in your goal. Studies show that when we write by hand and connect the letters manually, we engage the brain more actively in the process.

3. Accountability is essential to staying motivated. Food journals, dietary tracking, exercise logs, and sleep logs give real-time snapshots of their behaviors in action. By regularly charting your progress, you are more likely to continue pushing yourself towards your SMART goals. Checking in with your progress is a great visual for us to see that consistency is key, and helps motivate us to keep going.
 - a. My Fitness Pal
 - b. Apple Health App
 - c. Progress Pictures
 - d. Fitness Tests
 - e. Body measurements
4. Seek out social support and surround yourself with like-minded people. Even if you could theoretically accomplish your objective alone, there is inherent value in sharing your plan. It is why people get married in front of witnesses. Announcing your intentions sends a strong message to the world and, more important, to your unconscious mind, which can sometimes sabotage our best efforts. This will allow us to stay accountable and motivated.
5. Establish a personal reward system. It is always nice to be rewarded for your hard work, and we can all benefit greatly by implementing a personal rewards program. It does not have to be lavish, either, as sometimes simple rewards can go a long way to push us harder.
6. Do activities that you love doing! If you want to burn calories but hate running, don't run! Find another activity to get your heart rate, such as dancing, cycling, hiking, or kickboxing. By participating in an activity that you enjoy doing, you are more likely to stay on track and stay motivated because instead of "having to" workout, you will then change your mindset to "wanting to" workout.

Relapses are common and part of the motivation process of making real, enduring changes. Relapses can be discouraging, but they should not be viewed as signs of failure, but rather as short-term challenges that can be overcome. Being able to deal with relapse often includes identifying triggers that lead to relapse, developing coping strategies to deal with temptation, and planning for how to course-correct when a diet or fitness relapse occurs.

There's nothing like the satisfaction of making lasting changes to one's life—or to helping someone else make that change for themselves. Using these strategies can increase the likelihood of long-term success we want to achieve. Good luck!