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## Kickstart for getting healthy eating and exercise plan in gear? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

I've lost all my motivation to eat right and exercise within the past six months and I'm starting to gain weight and feel tired most of the time. What can I do to get back on track? I don't have the same desires to stay fit and this scares me... please HELP!!!!

In dire need of a diet/work out routine.

### Answer

Dear In dire need of a diet/workout routine,

While you may be low on motivation right now, don't fret; it's never too late to get back on track.

Instead of thinking about the negatives related to lack of exercise and poor diet (excess weight, feeling sluggish), thinking about the **positive benefits** of healthy exercise and eating patterns may help your motivation return. Exercise and a healthy eating plan can help promote long-term health, but they also have more immediate effects. Exercise helps relieve stress and causes the brain to release mood-improving compounds called endorphins. Time spent on exercise is time spent on you, time for you to consider the issues of the day or to simply clear your head. Working out improves sleep quality, so we have more energy to take on work, school, and the next workout. In the past, what positives have you experienced from exercising and eating well?

Having established some pros, you may want to consider the barriers that are keeping you from eating healthily and doing regular physical activity. One example might be that you don't see healthy lunch options at your workplace or school. Another could be that some fitness center memberships are too pricey. What are all the barriers you can think of? (Hint: start writing them down!) Once you know what you're up against, you can brainstorm solutions and take a step-by-step approach to implement your solutions. For example, with the lunch time conundrum, would it work to pack a healthy lunch two or three times per week? Or could you start to scour the menu and deli shelves for healthy options that may be hidden away? Some folks find that rewards are part of the solution. What are some non-calorie rewards that would give you the incentive you need to stay active and eat well?

Feeling sluggish can be related to giving your body more fat, sugar, and calories than it needs. An energy boosting, balanced diet includes plenty of fruit, veggies, low-fat dairy, lean proteins, and whole grains. Look at the related Q&As, or visit the [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#) [2] or [Choosemyplate.gov](#) [3] web sites for tips and guidelines that will help you to put together a healthy and tasty eating plan. As you change your eating patterns, you may even chart your moods in a daily organizer, to see the foods that are making a difference.

Another great way to get back on track with exercise and healthy eating is to gain the support of an ally. Working out with a buddy will make it easier and more enjoyable, and will keep you accountable for those days when you want to skip your exercise. By varying the time of your workout and the activity you do, you can prevent getting bored with your same old routine. Sharing a home-cooked meal with a friend can be fun and healthy.

If you prefer, you could also get a professional perspective. If you belong to a gym, you might consider scheduling time with a personal trainer. For healthy meal planning, consider making an appointment to speak with a registered dietitian. Above all, be realistic, have fun, take small steps toward your goals, and you'll be on your way to getting big rewards!

Alice!

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