

BATTLING BOREDOM

Are you finding it difficult to get out of bed in the morning for your daily walk? Are you making up excuses to skip the gym on the way home? Even the most dedicated exercisers occasionally get bored with their routines. Waning motivation, cutting workouts short and not having your old enthusiasm all are signs of a stale exercise regimen.

Quick Fix

First, evaluate your current routine to determine what really bores you. A new variation on your favorite activity—such as cardio-funk or kickboxing instead of step aerobics, or hoisting free weights instead of working on machines—may be enough to reinvigorate a stale routine.

If you've always worked out indoors, logging miles on a treadmill, stairclimber or stationary bike, move your workout outside for a welcome change of scenery. Run, hike or bike on trails; swim in a lake or ocean.

Bigger Changes

When tweaking your routine isn't enough, make bigger changes. Take up an entirely new activity—especially something you never thought you'd do. If you've always stuck to solitary pursuits, sign up for a team sport, such as volleyball, basketball or even doubles tennis. Or tackle something you've always shied away from—indulge your thirst for adventure with a rock-climbing class (starting on an indoor wall, then moving to the real thing as your skills improve).

Good Company

Working out alone often is an oasis of solitude in a busy day, but maybe you need some company. Exercise companions add a social element to any routine. Ask a friend to be your

workout partner—you're much less likely to skip a workout if someone is waiting for you.

Just about every sport or activity has a club; to find one, ask around at gyms or local community centers. Keeping up with the crowd also means that you'll be challenged to improve your skills. Ask about organized workouts and fun runs offered by local track clubs, as well as group rides hosted by cycling clubs.

Challenge Yourself

Many exercisers work out simply to stay in shape, and most of the time that's just fine. But setting a goal, such as finishing a 10K race or completing a rough-water swim, will give your daily workouts more meaning.

Start by incorporating bursts of speed into your workouts. After a gentle warm-up, alternate a fast pace with a slower one for recovery. This can be as simple as sprinting to the next tree, or as structured as running intervals on a track or sprinting laps in the pool.

Add Variety

Elite triathletes pioneered the cross-training concept, and it works for the rest of us, too. If you usually focus on one activity, substitute another a few days a week. Ideally, any exercise program should include elements of cardiovascular exercise, weight training and flexibility.

New Toys

Small exercise gadgets aren't necessary, but they can make your workouts more fun and challenging. Pedometers, heart-rate monitors, iPods, aquatic toys and safety equipment are just a few items to consider. Find out which new training gadgets are available for your favorite activity.

Take a Break

Sometimes you really do need time off. In that case, cut back on your usual routine and substitute other activities. You might even find an activity that you enjoy more than your old favorites.

Once you've fought your first battle with boredom, you'll know the tricks to keep exercise from becoming too routine. Trying new sports, new classes and new activities—and learning how to throw a little variety into your old standbys—can help you overcome the nagging inclination to devise those creative excuses for not working out.

Additional Resource

Exercise—A Guide From the National Institute on Aging: www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGuide/

If you are interested in information on other health and fitness topics, contact: American Council on Exercise, 4851 Paramount Drive, San Diego, CA 92123, 800-825-3636; or, go online at www.acefitness.org and access the complete list of ACE Fit Facts™



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