

DEFEATING DISCOURAGEMENT, 1 ROUND AT A TIME!

This year has been a difficult one for many people, in different ways. In terms of fitness, maybe you haven't been able to train in the sports you love and you notice your performance slipping further and further from where it used to be. Maybe you have been more sedentary this past year and now you have gained some weight or gained weight back that you had previously worked hard to lose. These can be discouraging for anyone.

So how do you keep working towards your goals when not only are you not motivated but you are downright discouraged? Too often I hear things like "I just don't have the motivation" or "I don't have the drive to train". Well, I have news for you, and it may not be what you wanted to hear but it is good news and will help you continue to move towards your goals even through times of discouragement. Those who are best in their fields don't depend on motivation to get there. Motivation helps you to keep the momentum going when things are going well. But when things aren't going well or when life just sucks in general what will keep you going is discipline and determination. Discipline is doing something because it needs to be done, not because you feel like doing it. In fact, if you feel like doing it you're not using discipline to do it, it's when you don't feel like doing something but you do it anyway because you know it needs to get done that you are using discipline. The good news is that when you utilize self-discipline, it helps you begin to develop other attributes like mental toughness. In short, self-discipline is forcing yourself to do something you don't want to do because you know it's the right thing to do and it needs to get done.

So how do you develop self-discipline? Well, you can't depend on anyone else to give it to you. Watching motivational videos and reading inspirational posters and memes will only help boost your desire temporarily and in many cases, it won't be enough for you to actually DO anything. Except look at more memes to make yourself feel better for a few minutes.

The first step in fighting discouragement, and yes, it is a fight, to phrase it as anything else would not prepare you for the determination you will need to beat it; is to own the fact that you are discouraged. Own the fact that you have slipped up, failed, fallen off the fitness wagon or whatever you are facing. Too many people try to act like they're not discouraged thinking it will help them gain motivation again. Ignoring discouragement and shortcomings is like continuing to work with a broken arm thinking if you ignore that its broken and keep working with it, it will just get better. Actually, it will get worse. Same with discouragement and shortcomings, if you ignore them, they just get worse. So, step 1, Own it, face it, admit that you are discouraged and that you aren't where you want to be. Admit you feel like crap and that you are out of shape.

Good, now you've done it, you have looked discouragement and failure in the eye and said, I see you and YOU (discouragement) are the problem, YOU (failure) will not stop me, and YOU must go. This is the first step in learning from failures and turning them into your future success.

So, what now, you've admitted you're discouraged and that you're not where you want to be. But you still feel like crap and you still don't have any motivation to do anything. This is where self-discipline comes in. So, what do you need to do next? DO anything. Force yourself to go for that walk or that run, yes, your time sucks, but we've already faced this shortcoming so kick discouragement in the

teeth and say yes, but I'M HERE. Do that one small thing. Make your bed, mow the lawn, go for a hike, GET OUT and GET ACTIVE. Guess what, now that you've done that 1 thing, you have accomplished something, you have taken the next step in defeating discouragement and getting back on track. Good, now do it again, force yourself to that 1 thing and then 1 more thing. You will find that the next thing is a little less hard to force yourself to do, and the thing after that even less hard. Before you know it you are feeling a bit better every day and maybe even WANT to do some of those things you were previously forcing yourself to do. Now you need a plan. Where do you want to go and how are you going to get there (this isn't really as complicated as most of us try to make it). So, sit down and make a plan, I know I know, I said get up and get active; but you need a plan or else you will end right back up where you started, discouraged and not making the progress you want. After you make a plan yes, get back up and get going, don't just sit there thinking about your plan. Put your plan to action. The plan should be simple, something like; I'm going to exercise for 30 minutes a day every day, or I'm going to go hiking at least twice a week on a local hiking trail or park. Put a date on your plans. Start on a specific day and follow that plan for a specific amount of time, such as 4 weeks. After 4 weeks adjust the plan to continue making progress. There are 2 main things to remember at this point. Consistency is key, stay consistent and keep at it, progress comes from consistency. Secondly, and this one is important, don't beat yourself up when you make a mistake, screw up or don't work out that day. Acknowledge it, realize why it happened so you can prevent it from happening again and get right back at it. If you beat yourself up and think things like forget it, I messed it up why keep trying, every time you make a mistake it could add to any discouragement you are facing. You need to keep pressing forward. One day, one step, one inch at a time. I'm sure you have heard people say remember why you started, and you should but you should also remember why you don't want to quit. Prove those negative feelings and discouragement wrong by never giving up. And THAT is determination, refusing to give up despite all adversity. In the words of Admiral David Farragut, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead".

These are some basic steps you can take to beat discouragement and start making progress towards your goals. It doesn't happen overnight remember it's about progress, not perfection. There are plenty of tools you can use to fight discouragement, I mentioned only a few here but these are the ones directly related to taking action and getting back on track. It is important not to overcomplicate things, take it a day at a time and do the next right thing.



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