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Waiting on Motivation?

Dear Dietitian,

I haven't been doing very well on following through with my eating and exercise goals. I want to do it but I just have no drive. Do you have any suggestions to help me get motivated?

Sounds like you're waiting for some magical force to surge through your body and make you "FEEL" driven and lively and willing to kiss your treadmill right after you hop on and run for hours with ease. I think you're looking for something that doesn't exist.

Motivation is not something you should wait for. Yet that's exactly what you're doing. It's as if you're at a train station and the train doesn't show up but you wait anyway. And you wait and you wait. In the meantime you could have walked a few blocks to your destination in less time than you spent waiting. Don't mistake motivation for something outside of YOU. It's not a hurricane ready to whirl you away against your will. It's not a long lost soul mate that you just have to be lucky to run into.

Motivation is not something that happens to you. Motivation is your *reason* for doing whatever it is you do. It's the *why* behind your actions. Why do you eat chocolate? Why do you eat fruit? Why do you want to exercise? Why are you not exercising?

Waiting for the feeling of motivation is like expecting love to be all about butterflies and warm-fuzzies and amazing feelings. Sure it's that way occasionally, but people who *expect* love to be that way *all* the time will be disappointed. Real life, and real people don't *always* inspire fireworks in us. Don't expect the gym or the treadmill or the side walk to romance you into exercise either. It will very rarely happen. Sometimes you have to act the way you'd like to be.

As a young girl and teenager I was quite shy. I was jealous of how easily the talkative and popular behaved in their outgoing way. I just figured...well they're born *that* way and I'm *this* way so it's not fair. It wasn't easy for me to talk to people I didn't know and I

figured that's just the way it was and forever would be. I tried to be more outgoing now and then...but I rarely “felt” outgoing and I figured I should quit trying because I couldn’t make myself “feel” outgoing. They were *lucky* to have an outgoing personality and I was not. End of story.

Here's the first problem with that kind of thinking. *Luck* has nothing to do with it. Even the most talented athletes and musicians practice their skill. If even such talented and skilled individuals still have to practice what does that say to you or I who are not as talented in our area of interest? To me it says I must also practice the skills I want to improve.

The second problem with calling it “luck” is that I assumed that all outgoing people were also confident and found it *easy* to be outgoing. You'd be amazed at how many outgoing people are actually quite insecure...they just happen to fake it quite well. You'd be amazed at the fun, smart, beautiful young women who have issues of insecurity, disordered eating, or hate their bodies. I've seen their lively interactions with others. So it amazes me that they are *insecure* with themselves—how can they be insecure when they behave in such a friendly and outgoing manner? They certainly fake their confidence well!

Of course you don’t want to fake your *personality*. But the lesson to be learned is that sometimes behaving *as if* you had confidence works great. Smiling at people as you walk by, holding your head up high, giving a confident handshake. ALL of these things train your mind to become confident. So what does this have to do with exercise?

It's the same way with motivation to exercise. Just like a shy person shouldn’t wait until he or she feels confident, you shouldn’t wait until you *feel* motivated. Just do it! The more you do it the more it will become a natural part of you. Your bad habits started that way too...the more you did them the more they became part of you. Why not use this tried and true technique to start a good habit?

You can choose to let the thought "I'm not driven" become a part of you. *Or* you can let the thought "I am a walker" or "I lift weights 3 days a week" or "I believe in taking care of myself" become a part of you.

Remember that while each one of us has limitations, each one of us also has a unique spectrum of abilities. Within each of those varied spectrums ...

You choose who you are and how you behave.
You choose your goals and what to do with your time.
You choose what and how you eat.

Don’t wait on motivation. Decide what’s important to you and then Create it!

- *Adina the Dietitian*

When You Know What You *Really* Want, You Won't Whine About What You *Can't* Have.

She did it. She bought her first motorcycle. She'd been planning and leafing through motorcycle magazines for weeks! She'd visited dealerships and could talk of nothing else since she'd settled on her plan. Beyond the obvious financial burden she'd committed to, the biggest commitment was giving up a cherished habit.

Anne* had been a serious nail biter for over 20 years of her 26 year existence. She'd tried to quit and even found temporary success at one point. But it didn't last. Nail biting was too easy and comforting for her. Her boyfriend even tried the tactic of threatening to break up with her (he was bluffing, though, and she knew it). Nothing worked, until...

Anne decided something important. She decided that she wanted a motorcycle, but didn't "deserve" it until she could leave her nails alone for 2 months. When she found something she *really* wanted, she didn't care at all about what she could no longer have.

True story.

What is it that you *really* want? You may be able to think of many answers, but for now, just focus on one thing...one thing you would like to accomplish in the near future. Perhaps something you'd like to change or improve about yourself. One thing that you've struggled with for a while.

Now let me propose my crazy idea for getting what you want. You can't get it unless *and until* you *really* want it. Anne *really* wanted to buy a motorcycle. She wanted it so much that she gave up her cherished habit of biting her nails.

What is your cherished habit? Are you willing to drop it for what you *really* want? If you cannot then the only reasonable conclusion is that you *really* want your habit more than the thing you *claim* to want.

What do you *really* want? Wishes are for fairytales. It's time to either stop wishing or take steps to turn your want into a reality.

*Name has been modified for privacy.

Product Review

Quaker Weight Control Instant Oatmeal

While I never considered oatmeal to be something that needed improvement (aside from a sprinkle of brown sugar and raisins for flavor, and walnuts for crunch), apparently Quaker has decided it does. Never mind that oatmeal has always been viewed as a “diet” or health food; Quaker marketers apparently have decided that they needed a stronger niche. So what’s the difference? Below is a comparison:

Contents	Apples & Cinnamon Instant Oatmeal	Weight Control Instant Oatmeal	Original Quaker Oats
Serving Size	1 packet (35 grams)	1 packet (45 grams)	½ cup (40 grams)
Calories	130	160	150
Fat	1.5 grams	3 grams	3 grams
Carbohydrates	27 grams	29 grams	27 grams
Sugars	12 grams	1 gram	1 gram
Total Fiber	3 grams	6 grams	4 grams
Soluble Fiber	1 gram	4 grams	2 grams
Protein	3 grams	7 grams	5
Added Vitamins/Minerals		Several	None

The Weight Control oatmeal packets compared to the regular flavored packets looks much better—twice as much fiber and four times more soluble fiber! You may notice that there is less sugar—a good thing, but the overall carbohydrate content has not changed. This suggests that the new oatmeal has more actual oats and less fluff than the previous flavored versions.

However when you compare the new Weight Control packets to the original plain old quick oats the difference is not as remarkable. Overall I don’t think the extra price is worth the added fiber and protein. 2 Tablespoons of walnuts can make up the protein and a small fruit can make up the fiber—plus you’d have a more well rounded meal.

My final conclusion

Oatmeal is a fabulous food and breakfast is your most important meal—put the two together, add some healthy toppings and a serving of milk or soymilk and you have a terrific start to your day. You don’t need a “diet” oatmeal. But if you are positive you need an oatmeal “packet” for the sake of saving time—then the Weight Control variety might be a better option than the other sugary, flavored packets.

Who Would Have Thought?

On a side note...did you know that Strawberries & Cream and Peaches & Cream instant oatmeal packets actually have no strawberries and no peaches? Those little pieces of dehydrated fruit are actually apples in both cases—with a little added color and strawberry or peach flavoring! It pays to read food labels ☺

Whole Grain Cocoa Puffs (and the rest of the General Mills family)

Ever since the [2005 Dietary Guidelines](#) for Americans have declared that we should be eating at least half of our grains as whole grains, cereal companies have scrambled to show off their cereals. General Mills now claims that all their cereals are made from “whole grain.” And indeed their labels do list whole grain corn, wheat, or rice among the first ingredients on their cereals. So naturally I wondered about such treats as Cocoa Puffs – have they really changed? Unfortunately I do not own an old box of this cereal for comparison with the new version. But I don’t need to.

A brief look at the new label for Cocoa Puffs reveals that, while more of its grain might be “whole grain,” the first ingredient is still sugar. Reese’s Puffs and other candy cereal list sugar as the second ingredient. While I have no problems with sugar in desserts—I do have problems with it as second ingredient in cereal and pretending that it’s a fabulous food for children. I also have a slight problem calling any cereal *nutritious* when it contains one wimpy gram of fiber.

Cocoa Puffs and Lucky Charms and Count Chocula may contain a few more whole grain parts and sometimes they may be just the things to satisfy a sweet tooth—but they are still a treat and not a good substitute for a true healthy breakfast.

In the next issue:

- **Beginning with Breakfast:** A brief look at the reasons for, and the benefits of, a nutritious start to your day. Also get ideas for quick and healthy breakfasts that will keep you from experiencing the mid-day slump.

Cheers!

Adina Tapu