

## **What Motivates You?**

**Find out and make this training season your best ever!**

By Diane Raymond

There she goes again. Your neighbor who sneezes out 10Ks in her sleep is training for her third marathon at 5am on a Sunday morning.

What drives her? And why can't you seem to embrace exercise with the same tenacity and focus?

Possibly, what motivates your marathon-mom-next-door is quite different from what motivates you. That is normal. The key to keeping yourself on track is in discovering what *intrinsically* motivates you, then leveraging that to your advantage.

### **Intrinsic Motivation in a Nutshell**

What is intrinsic motivation? Psychologically speaking, "motivation" is something that happens *within* a person, not something done *to* a person.

It refers to the internal dynamics of behavior – not the external stimuli.

While it is possible to spark motivation with something external, such as an upcoming wedding or to look great for your 20-year high school reunion, the most lasting type of kindling comes from within.

### **Intrinsic Motivation = Success**

I'll use fictional member Sally to explain. Sally decided to join Moms In Motion to train for a half-marathon. She has very little experience with exercise and admits to being an inconsistent exerciser. When asked what motivates her, she responds, "My husband said my jeans looked two sizes too small." Ouch.

Sally is reacting from an *external stimulus* (her husband). Sticking to her training program for 10 or 12 weeks will be challenging because she joined for reasons other than her own desire – a desire from within. As a result, her motivation will be difficult to sustain.

Her teammate Tina, on the other hand, represents the reverse scenario. Tina was active before kids, but since having children she is less consistent and hopes Moms In Motion will get her back on track. When asked what motivated her to join, she says, "My father had a heart attack at age 45 and I'm afraid I will suffer the same fate unless I take action now." She also wants to set a healthy example for her two small children. She knows regular exercise is the answer.

A-ha! Tina has chosen to participate for *intrinsic* (internal) reasons. Tina has a significant advantage over Sally because her internal belief system supports her goals and actions, constantly reinforcing her reasons for exercising (long-term health, to be a role-model).

### **What Sparks Your Engine?**

1. Before you begin an exercise program, ask yourself *why* you are doing it. It helps if you write down your thoughts, as you'll likely have many reasons. Some common examples include: wanting to lose weight; pressure from friends or family; to improve long-term health; the need for a challenge; to look better; increased energy; and to gain confidence in your own abilities.
2. Next, write down any negative feelings you associate with exercising (anxiety, fear, guilt, frustration, dread, pain). Did you abandon regular exercise in the past as a result of your feelings? Write down those instances as well.
3. Finally, attempt to make associations between what motivates you, your feelings, and subsequent behavior. For example, Sally's motivation is her husband's comment (external motivation); her feeling will likely be anxiety and/or frustration, possibly even anger; her subsequent behavior may be to quit. Use the steps outlined below to find an alternate form of motivation that will lead to lasting changes.

### **7 Tips for Igniting Your Natural Motivation**

1. Set meaningful goals in the present, personal-tense that are time-sensitive and realistic. Seek feedback during the course of the season from your team coach or teammates and/or give yourself small rewards, such as a manicure or spa treatment when you've achieved your goal(s).
2. Stimulate cognitive curiosity by learning all you can about the benefits of physical activity. When you exercise regularly there are many positive changes that take place in your body, aside from aesthetic changes.

For a list of the benefits of regular exercise, visit:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/exercise/HQ01676>

3. Make clear cause-and-effect relationships between what you are doing and what happens in real life. For example: within weeks of beginning and maintaining an exercise program, physiological changes begin to take place, such as a decrease in resting heart rate, improvement in delivery of nutrients to working muscles, and reduced feelings of anxiety and stress. One simple way to track the changes taking place is to regularly check your resting heart rate. Record it at the beginning of the season (preferably, first thing in the morning before you get out of bed), then again mid-way through and at the end of the season. Note any changes (it likely will go down, which is a good thing!)

4. Know that your hard work will lead to profound changes. Success stories and testimonials can be powerful motivators. Teammates and coaches are a great resource for testimonials -- just ask them what obstacles they, or someone they know, had to overcome to make their fitness goals a reality.

5. Make learning a game. Go on a scavenger-hunt for information about a particular topic, such as cardiovascular endurance, basal metabolic rate, or glycogen depletion. Some online resources for exercise physiology are:

- <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov>
- Journal of Exercise Physiology, <http://www.asep.org/journals>
- The Nicholas Institute of Sports Medicine and Athletic Trauma, <http://www.nismat.org/physcor>

6. Imagine success. Visualization is a powerful tool, especially if you suffer from low self-efficacy. Repeatedly imagining crossing the finish line will go a long way toward building confidence.

7. Start the season with a simple and safe field test. Ask your coach about participating in the Cooper 12-minute walk/run test, then retest at the end of the season. Comparing results to prior performances and/or seeing how you stack up to other women in your age group can be very motivating. For more information about this field test, visit:

- <http://www.topendsports.com/testing/tests/cooper.htm>
- <http://www.health-calc.com/content/view/6/7/>

## About the Author:

Diane Raymond is the Dublin, OH Team Leader, and the owner of Blue Sky Gym – a fitness business specializing in outdoor and in home personal training, lifestyle coaching, live workshops and educational resources. When Diane isn't busy coaching Moms In Motion teams or training her clients, she enjoys wearing out her four children, running (or course), traveling and writing.

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