



HOW TO OVERCOME BARRIERS TO EXERCISE

Physical activity and exercise can help you become both physically and mentally fit.

Exercise can help improve health and well-being by improving mood, reducing stress and decreasing depression. It can also help boost your self-esteem and give you confidence in other areas of life. To gain these psychological benefits you must maintain a regular exercise routine but this isn't always easy. As a disabled person you may face a number of barriers to physical activity which can make becoming and staying active a real challenge.

Here are a few of the common barriers and how you can try to overcome them:



“I really don't know where to start”

The most important thing is to find an activity that you enjoy doing so that you will keep doing it. Join a friend at the gym, try an exercise class or head to the park with your family; adding a social element can make it much more fun. Don't be afraid of trying new and unfamiliar activities as these can often surprise you and leave you wanting more. Find some like-minded people to exercise with in your area, you will help motivate each other. Also visit www.parasport.org.uk for information on what sports are available for disabled people and to help you find local sports clubs.

“I just don't have the time”

Many people live hectic lifestyles that are busy with both work and family commitments. Not having sufficient time to exercise is a genuine concern. Difficulties with travel can make your trip to an exercise venue annoyingly long or expensive and so it is important to consider where else you might be able to exercise. A long commute to your local gym is no longer needed if you can do a workout at your local park or even in your own home/garden. The amount of exercise you need to do to gain benefits is often overestimated too. As little as 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity a day, five times a week is enough to help you feel physically and mentally fit. Multiple bouts of at least 10 minutes are also just as good; how about before or after work and a short session during your lunch hour?

“My local facility isn't accessible”

Accessibility is a common issue faced by disabled people. However, you do not necessarily need a gym or leisure centre to become more active. You can do lots of exercises with minimal equipment in many different environments such as in your home or at the park. However, if you do fancy the gym, the Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) has an application where you can find a local club that has accessible equipment for disabled people. Visit www.efds.co.uk/inclusive_fitness/ifi_gyms

“I feel too tired to exercise”

If this sounds like you then consider when it is that you are most tired. If it's in the evening after work, then try to exercise in the early morning or during your lunch break. If you feel most fatigued first thing in the morning simply plan to do your exercise later in the day. These simple steps are common sense but will help you get started. It is also worth considering that regular exercise can actually reduce fatigue and help you sleep better. After a few weeks of regular physical activity you should notice your energy levels improve.

“Because I've always been rubbish at exercise and sport”

You may have disliked PE at school because of an emphasis on competitive sport, the group atmosphere, a lack of choice or that age-old classic of being picked last. It may be hard to forget these feelings but remember that as an adult you can choose exactly what type of exercise and/or sport you do, who you do it with, when and also whether you do it for leisure or competitively; you are in control! Finding a type of exercise that you enjoy will hopefully prolong your involvement.



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