



How To...

RETURN, BURN, & YEARN

Can't find the motivation to get back into training? Can't be stuffed working out? No sweat – the good doctor is in the house with a few tips on renewing your exercise mojo and enjoying a healthy lifestyle again...

By DR BRETT LILLIE

REVIVING YOUR LOVE FOR EXERCISE

We have a genuine love and hate relationship with exercise. We all seem to know the benefits that come with keeping the body active, yet some of us truly enjoy the process and the feeling we're left with after a workout, while others think of it as a chore, a painful but necessary evil that needs to be done. Most of us lie somewhere in between.

We go through ups and downs, periods of high and low activity, excitement and boredom. It really boils down to how much

time, energy and motivation is left in the tank at the end of each day. That's the trap a lot of us fall into.

Based on the latest available data, over three in 10 adults aged 18-64 aren't meeting the recommended amount of exercise with researchers at Duke University's School of Medicine suggesting that physical decline begins in our 50s. As we join the 40s and 50s club, we are often too exhausted to fit it all in, so we exercise less or stop altogether.

It's understandable, life is busy, it's often chaotic. On the one hand we have work, family, responsibilities that inevitably put us to the bottom of the priority list. On the other, we know we are getting older, we might experience aches and pains and we feel we can't do it anymore, or we are just not bothered. But it doesn't have to be this way. Here's some tips to rekindle your love for exercise so you too can reap the benefits that come with enjoying an active lifestyle.



CONNECT TO THAT FEELING

Freedom, spontaneity, ease, happiness, success, achievement, fun: whatever feeling you experienced when you were active, it's time to go back to it and use it to your advantage. When you connect to this feeling, you have a much better chance at changing your habits, start exercising and keep going. What activity could you do now that would bring that feeling, YOUR feeling, back to the surface?

FIND YOUR OWN PACE ON YOUR OWN TERMS

The trick for setting yourself up for success is to find your own pace and start on your own terms. Look at where you're at now: if you haven't exercised for a while, it might not be wise to sign up for the next marathon. So, start small. Just go for a quick 15-minute walk and then work towards small increments. Build up to a hike. Decide what works for you and what you can achieve. When you are able to close the gap between expectations (where you think you should be) and reality (where you actually are), that's where the magic happens, that's where your true YOU shines.

SHARE IT – THE POWER OF MANY

This is the oldest trick in the books: If you tell someone you're going to do it then... you will do it! Accountability is a powerful tool that even elite athletes use. They have their team, so find your own: move with your kids, your friends, your dog, your spouse. Make the time you spend exercising compelling, worth it, something you look forward to. I often go for a quick walk around the block with my wife; that's when we get unstuck, ideas pop and we connect, think more about what we want for us and our family. Some of my clients exercise with a friend then celebrate with a cuppa and a catch up. Enjoy.

SHIFT THE WAY YOU THINK

My wife Lisa hates the word exercise and feels it is just another stressful thing to pile on to her to-do list. So, she calls it "getting a groove on" and now associates it with being active, jiggling, dancing – all movements that resonates with her – rather than a task. Even Olympian Cathy Freeman has a word for it: body practice. Be creative and be kind to yourself. Exercise should be all about moving with joy, not something you dread. Pay attention to your thinking, your language and give exercise a meaning that sits well with you – make it yours.

REDISCOVER WHAT YOU USED TO LIKE

Think back to a time when you were being active just because it came naturally to you, and it was just part of who you were. The past is your teacher so use it, dig deep and find all those magic moments where you were active just being you. What were you doing? Who were you with? Was it a sport or simply a play in the backyard? Was it a walk with friends or a competition? Was it skipping, dribbling, riding, climbing, lifting? You'll start seeing patterns in your past that can reveal your inclinations and the reasons why you loved doing that so much, why it made your heart sing.



HOW TO STOP BAD EXERCISE HABITS

Finding the time and motivation to exercise amongst the business of life is already a feat on its own. If you're being active and keeping at it, take a moment to pat yourself on the back because you're doing great. However, we are creatures of habits and with time, even with our best intentions, we fall into traps that can work against us. No matter how hard we train, at one point or another we reach a plateau, a comfortable spot where if we don't take action, we can actually start undoing all the amazing work put in so far. You might feel like you're not progressing, your focus is just not there anymore, and you can't even remember why you're exercising in the first place. Time for a little "shake up". Let's look at how to do it.

YOU ARE ON AUTOPILOT

It is quite easy to fall into a lull: your body follows a routine like it's second nature, the mind is turned off and you find yourself running the same 5km track on autopilot. What you don't necessarily know is that when your body does the same exercise every time, it is actually de-conditioning. Thankfully, you only need a few tweaks to wake up from the trance and progress again. Pick one thing in your exercise routine that you can rejig and give it deliberate attention: it could be run a different route (or change directions), walk somewhere different, join a different class, exercise with a friend, increase your time once a week or your distance. Keep it fresh so you can wake your mind and body.

YOU ARE OVERCOMMITTED

It's only human to want something, to want it badly and to want it now. So, we throw ourselves at it 110% with great expectations

and enthusiasm, but life is hectic and often we can't sustain it all. The secret to overwhelm is to 'slow burn', find your own pace. Ask yourself if your expectations and exercise goals are realistic and achievable with what is on your plate at the moment. Ultra marathon runners are the kings of slow burn, they think long term, they train incrementally, they know they can only go the distance if they build their skills and condition bit by bit, over time. Think of training as a long-term game, something you want to keep doing forever.

YOU ARE OUT OF SYNCH

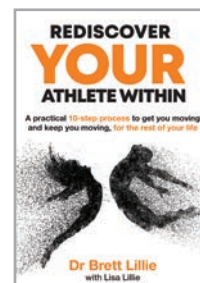
Our external world can be pretty fixed as far as time goes: we work nine to five, we eat at 12:30pm, we exercise around those times – when we can fit it in. Our body though has an internal clock that runs to its own beat and so it is easy to get out of synch. The research on circadian rhythm has now mapped out when it's the best time to exercise too early in the morning and you're not quite ready yet, too late in the evening and you can disrupt your sleep. The early afternoon is when activity levels, coordination and power are at their peak so that's the ideal time to train. If you are restricted by fixed working hours, maybe take your lunch break a little later and exercise when you're more in synch with your internal clock.

YOU ARE NOT INVESTING IN RECOVERY

If you're exercising, chances are you follow a routine or at least you try to stick to a regular schedule. You have days when you are active and "days off" when you can rest. Truth is, those quieter days in between are more than just times when you can take a break, they are your recovery days, a key aspect of

your training. Recovery means exercising in a lower gear and with less load so you can work on nuances of your performance and reinforce good habits. As we get older your recovery days become a greater priority to help maintain muscle strength and continue to progress without using all your precious resources. So, if you love cycling for example, have a spin day as recovery: you'll still be doing the same movement turning your legs over but at different intensity. If you are a runner, maybe go for a walk or hike on terrain, even the beach.

No matter what exercise habit you inevitably fall into, just remember that going back to the reason why you are exercising will always steer you back in the right direction. It could be for health reasons or because you want to be the best for your family. It could be because you want to challenge yourself or bring a bit of change into your life. Your 'why' is gold because it resonates with you, because it is you and will always make you focus on what really matters. ■



This is an edited from **Rediscover Your Athlete Within** (Publish Central, \$34.99rrp) by Dr Brett Lillie – a sought-after speaker, coach and rehab professional who helps people

rekindle their love for movement and find their mojo so they can live their best life – available at www.brettlillie.com