

Mental Prep for Better Performance

By Len Canter

HealthDay Reporter



"Get your head in the game!" Coaches say it to players all the time to get them to focus. The same advice can help you be more enthusiastic about your workouts. Here are five ideas:

1. Set both short-term and long-term goals based on your current abilities. Celebrate each one as you reach it and then re-set it. According to the American Council on Exercise, a goal should meet five different criteria to be effective. Make sure each goal is:

- **Specific:** You should be able to articulate it in one simple sentence.
- **Measurable:** The goal should be something you can see, like an amount of weight lost or duration of a workout.
- **Attainable:** The goal should represent a challenge to you, but not be impossible to reach.
- **Relevant:** It should be important to you and your life.
- **Time-Bound:** The time you allot to reach the goal shouldn't be open-ended, which could lead to procrastination. Set a reasonable time period for achieving it.

2. Identify what type of pre-exercise prep gets you psyched, such as quiet focused breathing or loud pulsing music.

3. Develop and repeat a mantra, an uplifting statement of what you know you can do. This will help you develop a positive attitude and have an unshakable belief in yourself. It will naturally get stronger as you reach goals.

4. Practice mental toughness. This is the mindset that helps you stay determined, focused and confident. Self-talk is a motivator that can help keep your confidence level high. Talk to yourself the same way you'd encourage a loved one: Remind yourself of your skills, your accomplishments and future goals.

5. Use mental imagery. Picture yourself reaching each goal, whether it's completing a spin class or a 5K run. Tap into the image whenever you need to refocus during exercise.