

Introduction: Consider how your physical health affects your mental health. For example, how do you feel mentally shortly after you have played a sport or worked out? In contrast, how do you feel mentally after spending several hours watching TV or surfing the Internet? Your answers probably show that physical activity has the more positive effect on your outlook.

Now, think about how your mental health affects your physical health. When you’re mentally strong, you want that “I can conquer the world” feeling that exercise provides. However, when you’re sedentary, under stress or depressed it’s difficult to get motivated to exercise. And there’s the conundrum: Exercise — one of the best ways to feel better — is also one of the hardest things to do when you’re stressed, down or out of shape.

So how can you make exercise a habit — something you do no matter how you feel? Identify one goal, stick with it and have a friend or family member hold you to it. Then, when you achieve your goal, reward yourself. (After awhile, exercise becomes its own reward because it makes you feel so good.) Even though it won’t be easy exercising when you’re

not feeling your best, having a plan and support will make you more likely to do it.

Instructions: Write down one exercise goal (e.g., to run a mile without stopping) and list three reasons you want to achieve it. Choose a goal that is challenging for you. Don’t worry about what other people’s goals are. Next, list the steps you need to take to achieve your goal (you can have as few as three or as many as 10). Start very small. For example, if you want to run a mile without stopping, your first goal might be to walk a half a mile. Then, you could advance to walking a mile, then to running a quarter mile, etc. Identify the date by which you want to achieve each step. Be realistic. If your goal is to run a marathon, you need to give yourself some time! Finally, under “call date,” write another date, sometime prior to the date you plan to accomplish that step. This will be the date on which a friend or family member will talk to you about how that step is going. Now, all that’s left to do is copy this sheet, give it to your trusted friend or family member and get to work. Oh, and don’t forget to give yourself a reward when you have accomplished your goal!

Goal:	Reason 1:	
	Reason 2:	
	Reason 3:	
Steps:	Achieve by:	Call date:
Step 1:		
Step 2:		
Step 3:		
Step 4:		
Step 5:		
Step 6:		
Step 7:		
Step 8:		
Step 9:		
Step 10:		
My reward will be:		