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The Antietam Leadership Experience *Last Chance to Register!*

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American history*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- From the Desk of the President
- The Antietam Leadership Experience
- Getting Motivated....And Staying That Way



Getting Motivated...And Staying That Way

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When I was a drill instructor at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in the late 1970s, unmotivated recruits were sometimes sent to what was called One-Day Motivation or, simply, One-Day Mote. To sum it up, the recruit spent most of the day away from his platoon performing a variety of Herculean labors and frolicking in the mud. Let's put it this way: Compared to One-Day Mote, basic training was a vacation. When the recruit returned in the early evening, he was still covered and/or caked with remnants of mud which was sometimes accessorized with twigs and other souvenirs from his unenviable day in the boondocks. He looked like Swamp Thing. For good measure, he was marched up and down the squad bay so that the other recruits could catch a glimpse and take a whiff. Needless to say, experiencing One-Day Mote – or seeing the aftermath – was a great motivator.

At one time or another, everyone has trouble getting motivated. But there's no need to motivate yourself by going through something as harsh as One-Day Mote.

Before discussing how to become motivated, it's important to understand the basics of motivation and there's no better place to start than its definition. Basically, motivation is a condition in which some type of behavior is "energized" or put in motion.

Keep in mind, too, that motivation can be good or bad. Take physical exertion, for instance. Some people are motivated to pursue physical work on a regular basis; others are motivated to avoid physical work at all costs. Nonetheless, this discussion of motivation will focus on desirable behaviors.

There are two main types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic (or internal) motivation comes from inside an individual. An example of intrinsic motivation is exercising in order to improve health and appearance or to derive satisfaction from hard work. On the other hand, extrinsic (or external) motivation comes from outside an individual. An example of extrinsic motivation is exercising in order to earn an additional day of vacation for passing a fitness test or to get a T-shirt or medal for running in a road race.

Extrinsic motivators tend to be short-lived. Thus, intrinsic motivators – those that come from within – are more preferable.

Here are seven ways to get and stay motivated. Let's see how this can be applied to initiating or continuing a fitness program.

Set goals. Most people begin a fitness program with the best intentions but quickly lose interest because they don't establish any goals. Effective goals must be specific, measureable, attainable and realistic with some type of deadline attached. So a goal of losing 10 pounds of fat in the next 10 weeks has a much greater chance of success than a goal of "dropping some weight."

Schedule a specific time to train. Hoping to "squeeze in a workout" at some point during the day might sound like a solid plan but is liable to result in a broken dream. If, instead, you set aside a block of time or schedule an "appointment" to exercise, the odds are much better that the workout will get done and become part of a regular routine.

Perform activities that you enjoy. An indoor rower is better than a stationary cycle because it engages a greater amount of muscle mass but using a rower won't do you much good if you absolutely dread the thought of rowing. The fact of the matter is that if you don't enjoy an activity, you won't be enthusiastic about doing it and will be less likely to perform it on a consistent basis.

Try new activities. When you do the "same old, same old," your fitness program will become monotonous and boring. And when a fitness program becomes monotonous and boring, interest in it drops rapidly and precipitously.

Refrain from doing too much too soon. Some people try to launch their fitness program with a lengthy workout, spending hours in the gym doing multiple sets of every exercise that was ever invented. Then the next morning, they wake up so sore and stiff that they need someone to help them get out of the rack. It's always better to start slowly and then gradually increase the volume of training.

Keep track of your performance. In addition to being an extremely valuable tool to monitor your progress, written records can make your training more productive and more meaningful. That's a big step toward staying motivated about a fitness program.

Get a training partner. You'll be more likely to stay motivated if you train with another individual. Ideally, your training partner should have similar interests and goals.

Bottom line: A lack of motivation can be overcome by employing a few simple recommendations.