

Finding Your Motivation DNA

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I'm convinced that there is no such thing as an unmotivated person...most people just aren't sure what motivates them or how to keep the momentum going. – Tamara Lowe

By the time you read this article, we will be almost a quarter into 2013. I often hear from clients and group fitness class participants who are religious and disciplined about their workouts make predictions of when the fitness center and group classes will get back to “normal,” meaning all the “New Year resolution” crowd inevitably dwindle after a month or two of being all gung ho about losing weight and getting healthy. I choose to work in this industry because I keep holding on to the hope that one year things will be different and everyone will actually stick with it and my purpose would be to find a way to help people get there.

A few months ago, I wrote about the possibilities and limits of willpower so I hope you've been training your willpower muscle enough and still staying on track with your goals. To help you use your willpower more effectively and efficiently, let's talk about your “motivation DNA.” In other words, what makes you tick?

I came across this article about an eight-year study of more than 10,000 participants. The researchers of this study identified six factors that tend to motivate us, each to varying degrees: productivity, connection, stability, variety, internal and external rewards. These factors become the building blocks of our own unique “motivation DNA.” Having this insight will allow us to find ways to re-energize ourselves and maintain our drive towards our goals.

First, let's find out what fuels your engine. Are you more driven by competition, deadlines and results or teamwork and relationships? If you are the former, you are most likely a producer. Numbers and results motivate you so you will probably do well with training for an event (e.g. 10K, triathlon etc.) so you have a specific timeline and goal to keep you motivated. If you lean towards the latter, you are a connector and can stay motivated by making yourself accountable to someone (e.g. your personal trainer or friends you make from your favorite group fitness class).

Next, which environment do you thrive in? Set, reliable schedule and routine or adventure, new experiences and changes? If you prefer routine and consistency, you are considered a stabilizer and will do best if you can get up first thing in the morning to get your workout done. Otherwise, any number of surprises may prop up over the course of the day and you will have a hard time motivating yourself to make the adjustments necessary to stick with your workout plan. On the other hand, if repetition and tedium saps your energy, you will need to keep your workouts fun by constantly bringing variety into the equation. Try different classes, fitness programs or consult a personal trainer who is great at finding creative and fun ways to keep you challenged. The bonus is even if your mind doesn't get bored of the same workout, your body will so give it that shock from time to time and you will continue to see results. That alone can keep you adequately motivated.

Lastly, what gets you to perform at your best? Does working for the greater good inspire you or are you more spurred by tangible benefits like bonuses and recognition? If you tend to do your best when you feel like you're doing meaningful work and making a difference while monetary rewards seem secondary, you're an internal reward seeker. Riding the bike to work to save the environment or staying in great shape so you can pull your weight when you volunteer to work at Habitat for Humanity may keep you fired up and ready to go every day. If you thrive on recognition and tangible rewards, you are more of an external reward seeker. Go ahead and be the front row person in a group fitness class so the instructor can pull you on stage to show off your moves and flex your hard earned muscles or treat yourself to that new pair of sneakers or outfit to keep you looking and feeling sharp.

The bottom line is it's all about finding out what makes you tick and use this knowledge to keep you motivated and energized so you can live your life to the fullest. I look forward to seeing a buzzing studio and packed classes with “you” in it all year long!

References

Lowe, T. (2009) Get Motivated! Random House, Inc.