



Stretch your organizing muscles.

For years I have struggled with motivating myself to exercise. Recently I've found a system that's been working for me. All of a sudden I see so many parallels between exercise and organizing.

1) Don't start off too fast. With exercise your body may rebel and you may risk injury. Being too ambitious can cause burnout. With organizing you probably won't get injured but your spirit may rebel! I've seen people dump everything out of their closets and empty their drawers. That leaves them overwhelmed and in worse shape than they started!

2) Accept where you are. When you start to train you look at where you are now and where you want to be. You set a goal and you go. The same goes for organizing. It doesn't do any good to dwell on past failures or worry about how much you've accumulated or how bad things have gotten. It is what it is. Just get started.

3) Formulate a plan. When exercising, you might schedule a workout in the morning three times a week. Or you might decide to walk on your lunch hour. Creating a routine is the secret. You decide what you're going to do and when you're going to do it. Otherwise the day gets away from you. The same is true in organizing. Figure out what needs to be done and schedule it. Give this appointment as much priority as you would any other.

4) Be patient. If you start running, it takes awhile to get your wind, your lungs may burn...and you won't necessarily see immediate results. It's the same for organizing. It took awhile to get into a disorganized state, allow yourself time to make the necessary changes. Just hang in there, the results will come. *Really!*

5) Train first. If you were planning to run a marathon, you would run a few smaller races before you would run 26 miles. If you are a novice to decluttering, don't start with your hardest project. Clean out the junk drawer and build your momentum.

6) Think long-range. The best training programs are not about the short term fix. They are about changing your lifestyle. You may want to lose weight, but if you want the results to last, you build exercise into your life. Likewise, your goal may be to remove clutter but in order to keep things organized regular maintenance is required.

7) Find a buddy. I have a few exercise buddies and we meet at a set time. This offers motivation and accountability. I show up because I don't want to bail on a friend if I know she's going to be there. The social aspect keeps me going because my buddies

are positive and encouraging. If you think that the buddy system could help you, swap time with a friend. Or hire a professional to help you get the job done.

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