

Make your heart beat faster

Exercise can be a divisive topic. Some are quite happy with the odd walk to keep the blood flowing, while others are peppy exercise evangelists, regularly pumped up on endorphins. Suzi Brown helps navigate the territory in between.

Lycra isn't everyone's cup of tea, and after all, we're not all built for distance running or aerobics classes not to mention loud repetitive club anthems...especially as one's age increases. But you can find a way to exercise in moderation, at a level and intensity that suits you. And there are methods to fight that natural inclination to stay buttocks-firmly-on-the-couch, even when the weather is less than inviting.



From battling the bulge to enjoying a quicker memory, the benefits of increasing your pulse rate are endless and long-lasting. All research points to the fact that we'll have healthier, happier bodies and minds if we make a habit of taking some daily exercise. If you're currently not exercising, don't fret, you can work up to it. I'm no Olympian, but I have learnt a few tips and tricks to encourage myself to go just a little bit further, or a little bit faster... because there really are rewards beyond the comfort zone.

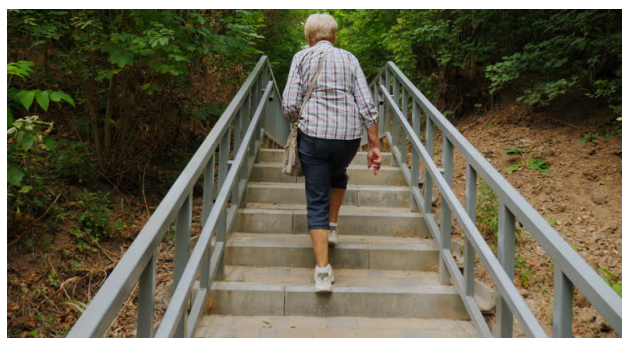
Motivate yourself to get moving

- 1. It's in the mind.** As a regular runner and gym goer I know the key to getting moving can be as simple as a change of outfit. Just as climbing into your nightclothes prepares your mind for sleep, changing into 'active wear' sends a message that it is time to exercise. Honestly, once you're in your gear, half the battle is won. All you need is a pair of supportive sports shoes and comfortable clothing which has plenty of room for movement. Remember several light layers are better than one bulky one as your body will heat up as you start moving.
Hint: Second hand shops are simply exploding with barely used exercise clothes. A new top or shorts can do wonders in encouraging you out of the house. Even some new cushion-soled sports socks can help do the trick.
- 2. Start small.** This is my oldest, most basic way to trick my mind into an exercise session: if you REALLY aren't in the mood for it, just tell yourself you will walk/jog/bike a small distance. Whatever isn't too overwhelming for your personal level of fitness. For some this might simply be a slow amble to the corner, for others a jog to the end of the street. The thing is, once you have actually made it to the corner you'll find you are surprisingly feeling quite good, and since you went to the trouble of getting changed and onto the footpath, you may as well go to the next corner! I have tricked myself into a lot of longer-than-intended jogs by using this useful technique.

3. **Use encouraging affirmations.** Our friends at Nike have hit it out of the park with their slogan which I repeat in my head regularly: **JUST DO IT!** They're the perfect three words to get up and get going. And once I am going, another favourite is, "I am running rings around anyone sitting on their couch right now." Then, there are the questions I ask myself: "Am I man or mouse?" (Correct answer is man.). I also remind myself this is only a very small portion of my 24-hour day, and that I will feel fabulous (and relieved) when I've actually finished this thing. (Followed by imagining the relief and joy of the steaming hot shower at the end, and the knowledge that I've earned myself a treat after dinner!)
4. **Find that song.** You cannot overestimate the affect of a well-chosen song on your psychological condition. Find a playlist in the genre and pop on some headphones or earpods. If you enjoy a podcast then choose a goodie. It really is a helpful way to distract your mind from that fact that your body is a bit sore or tired.
5. **Join a group exercise session.** These are on offer in most retirement villages and many communities. They range from gentle stretch classes to 'bootcamps' or retro dance groups, and offer the opportunity to exercise with a group of like-minded people under the expert tutelage of an instructor. The group usually runs on a fixed day and time so is easy to incorporate into your weekly routine. I have been going to a 'boot camp' for 12 years now and as we have aged the instructor has adapted the programme to include more body strength and mobility work. My 'classmates' have become good friends and will text to check in on me if I don't attend which means I don't make excuses! It is one of the social highlights of my week made even better as it incorporates exercise.
6. **Make a regular date to meet a friend to walk your favourite circuit or to explore new tracks in your region.** There are also a wide variety of annual charity walks which offer the opportunity to be social, stay fit and support a worthy cause. Examples include The Pink Ribbon Walk for breast cancer and the Walk to Defeat MND for motor neurone disease. If you need to find someone to walk with search the web for "Walking groups near me", and you will find most communities offer at least one group aimed at those over 50.
7. **Dangle a carrot!** Once you have done this walk, or that workout, reward yourself with something small but wonderful. That morning coffee tastes soooo much better when you've earned it.

What type of exercise should I choose?

The choices are endless! I would encourage you to start with what sort of personality you have, or the kind of lifestyle you lead. If you are surrounded by people a lot, then a walk by yourself might be just the ticket. However if you perk up around others then choose something more sociable like a group



exercise class or a trip to the gym where you can have a chat with those around you. Women in particular benefit from weight bearing exercises as they age, as bone density decreases. Weight training encourages not only firmer muscles, but the ability to retain strong bones and stave off osteoporosis. Some examples would be:

- Weight bearing exercises – a group of activities that are carried out while on your feet, meaning you bear your own body weight. You could try jogging on the spot or aerobic dance.
- Body weight training: these are a simple, cheap and effective way to increase your body strength and improve balance and flexibility. The beauty is they don't require machinery or extra equipment with only body weight for resistance. Think push-ups, chair dips, lunges, wall sits or climbing stairs.
- Resistance training. This generally uses equipment like dumbbells or resistance bands. These exercises in particular are great for increasing bone density, and can also reduce the risk of falls and prevent muscle mass loss.
- Isometric exercises: Think planks, wall sits, glute bridges or warrior poses. You can try these at home as they require no equipment and can be achieved without a huge time outlay.
- Pilates/yoga has multiple benefits. It is a way to exercise gently, reduce tension and improve flexibility and balance as well as refreshing the mind and soul.



Incidental exercise

Exercise doesn't need to be intentional for it to be exercise! Look out for opportunities for "incidental" activity. Basically that means exercise that happens during a typical day. For example: household chores, gardening, shopping and simply skipping the lift and walking up stairs. These small exercise opportunities have been shown to be hugely helpful in warding off weight gain and improving general health, as well as helping avoid the mental load of putting aside time to be specifically active.

TIP: Add extra incidental exercise to your day by parking a bit further away from a place or person you might be visiting. Obviously this will increase your daily step count – and every extra step helps.

Take a seat

Why not try mixing up your usual exercise routine, and take a seat! Seated exercise can be just as beneficial for improving strength, flexibility and balance as the traditional forms, but with the added positives of being suitable for those with mobility issues or medical conditions. There are gentle seated exercises to suit almost anyone, and many

affordable community-based classes with experienced instructors who can guide you. You can work on improving your strength, flexibility and balance and leave feeling energised, while enjoying a supportive environment with like minded individuals.



Resources for every body:

[NymbL Balance Training App](#) is ACC's free digital balance app. NymbL enables you to improve your balance by taking you through simple body movements. Give up on your excuses about cost, this app is completely free! Enjoy its easy-to-use format with step-by-step instructions.

<https://www.livestronger.org.nz/find-a-community-strength-and-balance-class/find-a-strength-and-balance-class/find-a-class>

Pop to this webpage to find a great selection of resources including video exercises to do at home or simply click on your region and find a class near you. Tip: Some of the church-based community classes are followed by morning tea, where you can reward yourself for your diligent exercise efforts!

Workout jargon explained

Do you feel like people are speaking ancient Greek when the conversation strays into working out? It is all actually pretty straight forward. After digesting the descriptions over the page, you'll have it down in no time:

Cardio (Cardiovascular exercise):

Any form of exercise that makes your heart beat harder and breathe more heavily. This is a great workout for your heart.

Endurance: This is similar to cardio exercise in that it increases your heart and breathing rate. As the word suggests, endurance is generally longer lasting. It can be weight-bearing or non weight-bearing.

HIT: High Intensity Interval Training. This involves alternating short bursts of intense exercise with periods of rest or lower intensity activity. HIT workouts are known for burning a lot of calories in a short amount of time.

Reps (Repetitions): This refers to one complete cycle of a movement in an exercise. So, if you do a bicep curl where you raise and lower the weight one time, that's one rep.

Sets: This refers to a group of repetitions performed consecutively with a short rest in between.

Strength training: This type of exercise uses weights, resistance bands, or your body weight to build muscle strength and endurance. Examples include squats, lunges, push-ups, rows, and bicep curls.

ENOM (Every Minute on the Minute): This is a workout structure where you perform a set number of reps of an exercise at the beginning of each minute. The remaining time can be used for rest or recovery.

AMRAP (As Many Reps/Rounds As Possible): This type of workout challenges you to complete as many reps or rounds of a circuit as possible within a set time frame.

There are many other exercise terms and acronyms out there, so don't hesitate to ask a trainer or gym staff if you come across something you're unsure about. They're there to help you understand and feel comfortable with your workout routine.

Reference: Aged Advisor 2025