

Finding Motivation and Training Partners

by: Liz Newbery



Motivation. One of the biggest hurdles in any athletic activity. Or in any activity in life, really. Throughout this series of articles, I've been trying to address step by step some of the blocks/barriers to pursuing an active healthy lifestyle - time, money, and motivation being the most pressing for many people. Motivation is kind of an elusive quality, but here's a few ideas on creating more.

Training Partners

By far one of the most effective ways to motivate yourself is to find other people to train with. Not only do we tend to be less likely to skip workouts when we know we have to meet people, it is more fun to train with others, and enthusiasm and motivation are contagious. The trick is to actually find training partners, especially if your social circle doesn't consist of a bunch of triathletes.

The first place to look is local clubs. Many running, biking and triathlon stores have organized runs and bike rides from their stores a couple of times a week. These tend to be of minimal organization (just show up at the store at the right time) and they also tend to meet the needs of a variety of levels of athletes, including the very new athlete. Even if your local store doesn't have a club that they themselves organize, the owner will be hooked into the local recreational athletic community, and will be able to point you in the direction of groups with similar interests and goals. Also try a google search for your sport and your community, and you will likely come up with something. The following websites have a listing of contacts for running clubs across Ontario:

[Ontario Road Runners](#) or, for a wider range of outdoor activity clubs,

<http://www.out-there.com/ton01club.htm>

http://www.canadatrails.ca/biking/bk_clon.html

You might also look to see if you have a local chapter of the Hash House Harriers. These folks have this strange but somehow appealing tendency to drink beer and run at the same time, as part of a kind of scavenger hunt, which, I suspect, includes hunting down pubs. Again, most clubs cater to athletes of all levels, and are quite supportive of beginners.

If you can't find a club of any kind in your community, maybe you could start one. Try putting up a sign at your local gym. If people who show interest are strangers, consider meeting and running in daylight in populated areas until you have a group that you know well and are comfortable with. Also, some gyms have exercise classes where people become regulars - some of these folks may be interested in more extensive group training.

Goals

Goals are extremely motivating. Figure out your goals for the season and come up with a plan to work towards them. And don't just think about them; write them down, and strategize about them. I have a friend who thought about doing a marathon for years, until one year, 6 months before the marathon, she decided to register. This was enough motivation for her to follow through on her long time dream. Somehow pre-paying money for a race or a class tends to make us more likely to attend. Maybe consider registering early for your season's events so that you have something tangible (and impending!) to work towards. Some people also keep training logs (I just print empty calendars off the computer) as a way to track progress. Progress itself is motivating.

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Maintaining Interest

Sometimes training can get to be boring when we always run the same routes. Find a couple of beautiful routes in your community, and also vary training routes frequently. Try organizing some special trips - meet friends at a conservation area for a morning run. Or, if you can, plan a training weekend away with friends, combining vacation with fitness. Or organize unique training experiences. I've often thought of organizing my friends on a Halton Hills day of bike riding, planned around stops at pubs, cafes, and artists' studios.

If you find you are lacking intrinsic motivation, promising to reward yourself often works - decide on a reward for when you meet a time goal, or complete your first 2 hour run, or complete a series of difficult hill repeats. A day off, a good bottle of wine, an evening out, something new, a post-run latte - whatever it is that you can picture during your run that you will treat yourself with when you are done. I've found it best when rewards are positive, and stay away from thinking negatively when I don't manage to complete goals. If you are feeling constantly tired, are experiencing changes in mood and/or sleep patterns, and are working harder than you previously needed to, then you may be over trained. It's worth looking up articles specifically on overtraining, but for starters, take some time off and allow your body and mind to rest so that triathlon can become fun and energizing once again.