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GET MOTIVATED!

Let us show you how to do it now.

BY LESLIE JOSEL AND SUSAN WEINER, MS, RDN, CDCES, FADCS

I just don't feel like it. I'm not in the mood to deal with my job—or my diabetes self-care or ever-growing to-do list—today." Sound familiar? Have you tried for the umpteenth time to clean out the coat closet or get your kitchen organized and decluttered so you can prepare healthy meals?

It's less about disorganization or even time management and more about the desire to begin and the stamina to keep on going. So why are getting motivated and staying the course so difficult? Here are some insights.

Why it can be so hard

The act of getting started with improving your diabetes management can often be difficult and overwhelming. Daily diabetes self-care is labor intensive, and what you want to accomplish may feel too big, too vague, or too undefined. For example, if you set your sights on a massive and overwhelming goal such as "get healthy," you may not see the path forward for accomplishing that unmapped goal.

Perhaps you may feel a lack of structure or direction. Without a schedule or plan, most of us can't muster enough energy to start or continue. And for some, getting started on tasks or projects we dislike or find scary is just too hard to make happen. This is true even if we know and understand how important the tasks are to accomplish, including daily diabetes care.

Tips to get—and stay—going

We're all wired to put things off, but we also have the capacity to work toward overriding that tendency. Here are some essential strategies to get you going.

1. Get your GPS on

Try to figure out where you're going before you get started. We suggest creating a road map to help you find your way.

First, write it down. Get the goal out of your head and onto paper where you can see it. For example, write on your calendar "schedule dental check-

up." Research shows that we are more likely to commit to doing it if we write it. Documentation or writing holds us accountable and makes it real.

Second, break it down. Way down. We can't stress this point enough. We know that breaking a task into manageable parts makes working toward them less overwhelming. Additionally, it offers multiple opportunities for smaller successes. Success provides the positive momentum we need to stay motivated. So instead of putting on your "to-do" list something vague like "reorganize kitchen," actually write out the steps: "Organize refrigerator contents," "Toss expired items from the pantry," etc. It's much simpler to wrap our brains around accomplishing each one of these small steps, which makes them easier to start and finish.

Third, schedule appointments for each task. Assign deadlines to complete each one and schedule them as regular "appointments" in your calendar so you know when to work on a specific task or change in routine. This

step is critical. Make these appointments non-negotiable (and be sure to include challenging items such as following up with your insurance company or reordering diabetes supplies). You wouldn't cancel your meeting with your boss or your child's teacher, so treat appointments and tasks for yourself with the same commitment.

Next, make getting started simple. Begin with something so easy and small that success is guaranteed. Schedule one medical appointment you might have put off for the past year. Send one email. Make one call. You get the idea. Chances are that once you get started, you'll keep on going.

Leslie's favorite go-to strategy?

Separate the setup from the actual task. If you make setting up for the task a step of its own and focus only on getting that done, it will make getting started easier. So, what does that look like? Say you want to prepare more nutritious meals and use what you already have on hand at home. Focus first on taking inventory of the food in your pantry, refrigerator, and freezer. Next, construct your grocery shopping list so you have all the ingredients in place. Merely starting will give you a true sense of accomplishment and the confidence to keep going. And setting up the task provides that all-important visual cue of what you need to work and focus on.

Lastly, use a timer. This is one of the simplest but most powerful tools that you can use to stay motivated. Set aside a specific amount of time to help you stay on task. Think about it: It's much easier to commit to 20 minutes than it is to hours and hours of cleaning and decluttering your kitchen counter or organizing your pantry. Dislike organizing your files or going through the mail? Set a timer to get you through. When we see time tick down, we may be more likely to get in gear and move forward.

2. Set your stage to optimize success

We believe that everyone needs to create positive energy around their tasks to get motivated, and to that point, your environment plays a huge role in helping you get things done. Take a good hard look at the spaces

you spend time in and make sure you've created your "happy" place.

Simply put, if you don't enjoy your home or office workspace, then you're not going to get down to business. So, paint your office or bedroom walls orange if that's your favorite color, pour delicious tea into your favorite mug, place your desk or workspace near natural light (research shows that natural light works best to increase the brain's ability to focus), or purchase colorful pens or pretty file folders.

No matter what tools you use, create an environment that will keep you going so you finish strong every time. And on that note, try pairing an unpleasant task with one you love doing. Is laundry your Achilles' heel? Save it for an episode of your favorite travel show. Dislike answering work emails? Take your computer outside to your garden.

3. Try body doubling

A "body double" functions as an anchor. The presence of another individual (virtually or perhaps on the phone) helps keep you focused and makes it possible to get and stay on target. Can't seem to make it to exercise class? Having trouble preparing your food shopping list? Identify what you need and call in the troops.

4. Know your "primetime"

Are you a morning person? Night owl? Do you work better when you have lots of balls in the air, or do you like to focus on one thing at a time? Maybe you prefer to have music blaring instead of working in complete silence. Tap into your best practices to encourage maximum motivation.

It's also important to become the master of your computer domain. Can't resist the pull of social media or internet surfing? Then shut it down. Try a computer program like Freedom (freedom.to) that disables your internet connection across all your devices for a specific period of time. Limiting online time will not only eliminate distractions but also provide you with something to look forward to when the work is done. Pinterest, anyone?

5. Be kind to yourself

Don't underestimate the power of rewards. A scenic stroll on the beach with a friend, a hike with your dog in the woods, or sipping your favorite blend of tea while listening to a jamming playlist. Build in the rewards, whatever yours are. Once you complete a goal, it's time to celebrate. You've earned it.

And most importantly, forgive yourself. Yes, you heard us. We can get very angry with ourselves when we don't do what we want or need to do. Research shows that all that negativity makes the problem worse. So, instead of being hard on yourself, forgive yourself. You'll be better for it. **DSM**

Leslie Josel, an ADHD student and parenting coach, is the author of "How to Do It Now Because It's Not Going Away: An Expert Guide to Getting Stuff Done." Susan Weiner, MS, RDN, CDCES, FADCES, is the owner of Susan Weiner Nutrition, PLLC, and coauthor of "Diabetes: 365 Tips to Living Well Together." Josel and Weiner coauthored "The Complete Diabetes Organizer."

Use Time Travel to Push Through Procrastination

Imagine this scenario: You're trying to psych yourself up to take inventory of the food you have in your pantry, refrigerator, and freezer, so you have a clear picture of what's on hand, but the pull to do anything but that is at an all-time high. How do you make sure you do what you need to do?

Project yourself into the future and imagine how good you're going to feel once that task or project is done. We like to do it on a rating scale of one to 10. For example, "How good will I feel in two hours when I've finished planning my dinners for the week?" Really allow yourself to experience those positive feelings. Put yourself in a feel-good scenario, such as being able to spend time with friends later, so that you can bust that procrastination plague.