

Motivation: what is it, where do you get it, how to keep it!

What has motivated each and every one of you to contact BACTK? Many things, I'm sure. Overall, you all desire to be healthy. You want to change old habits and learn new habits that will become a way of life for you and your families.

Remember how desperate many of you felt when you first called for an appointment? Remember how excited, hopeful, and enthusiastic you felt the first several weeks after meeting with us and getting started making changes towards your healthier lifestyle? That is motivation. But it is only one phase of motivation. Many of you may remember that initial enthusiasm and hopefulness, but weeks to months later, realities of everyday life often make it difficult for this initial phase of motivation to last.

Motivation is all about understanding what is important to you. For many of the parents, it is overall health and longevity. You may have a strong family history of diabetes, heart disease, or another weight-related health problem. You may have ignored your own unhealthy habits over the years, but now you realize these health issues may also impact your children, and your primary motivation is stopping the unhealthy lifestyles and behavior that have contributed to the family history of preventable medical problems. For teens and younger kids, your motivation may be to run as fast as some of your friends or not have to buy "husky" size clothes.

Whatever your motivation, it is helpful to really think about what you ultimately want, why you want it, and what you are willing to do to get it. If you want to be healthy and reduce you and your families risk of diabetes and heart disease, talk about and show pictures to your children of family members you may have lost or may now be sick from these diseases. Be realistic about what you want.

Reducing your risk of medical complications due to overweight, may not mean you will eventually wear a size 2 when you currently wear a size 20 and would be healthy and happy aiming for a realistic size 10. Do you want to run a marathon, or more realistically achieve a fitness level that would allow you to comfortably take a 3-4 mile hike with your family, and still go swimming afterwards?

What are the consequences of not changing? What will be different when you do change? What will you be able to do that you can't do now? There can be many reasons one wants to be healthier: better health and longevity, improve self-esteem, play ball with the kids, have more energy, be able to run the mile at school, fit into a smaller clothes size. Whatever your reason or reasons you want to be healthy, think about them. Understand why you want what you want.

Spending time really thinking about your motivation on this lifelong journey of a healthy lifestyle will help you keep your motivation stronger and more enduring.

What about after the "honeymoon" phase, when your motivation isn't as easy to access? You remember feeling excited and motivated, but now everything seems too difficult and not worth the struggle. You find yourself slipping back

into old habits and finding excuses to justify them. First of all, remember this is normal. It is almost predictable, but we'd be happy to hear that it isn't experienced by everyone!!! Don't delay. Ask for help. Enlist the help of your family, friends, and health providers (us!!) for support and encouragement. For those of you who may feel guilty, ashamed, or like you have failed. You have not!! We are all human. You only fail if you quit trying. A Buddhist saying is, "I fall seven times, I get up eight".