

# How to Begin When You Don't Know Where to Start

Back in 2003 when I began my fitness journey, I was supremely unhealthy and seven sizes bigger than I am now. Maybe this isn't your story or maybe it is — no matter where you are when you begin, the road that lies ahead can feel pretty darn daunting.

People tell me all the time that they don't know where to start, describing feeling lost and frustrated, and the look in their eyes tells the same story. I get that. It doesn't matter if your journey is a quest to lose pounds or a quest to reclaim your life. It can be very overwhelming to turn your life around. I mean, with so far to go, where does one even start?

The answer is surprisingly simple ... just take the first step. Seriously, put one foot in front of the other and begin. We all know what it takes to be healthier — eat better and move more. The internet is full of wisdom on the subject and we have more resources at our fingertips than ever. So it's not lack of knowledge that's the problem. Often it's because we think it'll require turning our lives upside down.

Lives are changed one habit at a time. There's no requirement that you wake up one day and completely overhaul your life. I'd actually put that right up there with the least successful strategies for lasting change.

## What Does Work?

Here's a few examples of what I've seen work.

- **Change your mindset.** Don't get fit because you think you should. Or because you can't stand the sight of your body. Get fit because you deserve to live a full and [happy life](#). Get fit because it's the best way to keep your body operating efficiently and keep it young. Get fit because you love yourself, not because you think you aren't good enough the way you are.
- **Start where you are.** If you've been inactive for quite some time, it's time to accept that. Think about your GPS — you can't get directions to where you'd like to go without entering your starting point. The same principle applies to your fitness journey. Know where that place is, be okay with it and resolve to treat yourself better from here on out. No more denial, judging or feeling bad about how you got here.
- **Start small.** The secret to lasting change is to make small adjustments to the things you do every day. Take a look at your day and determine where you may have been shortchanging yourself with your decisions. Maybe you've been sacrificing an hour of sleep to watch a TV show or to peruse social media. Maybe you could do without those things in exchange for more rest. Or just start by giving up the things you probably won't miss, trading up for [healthy habits](#) that'll help you find more balance.
- **Don't try to become someone you're not.** The path to being the best possible you doesn't lead you to being someone else. Odds are, you're not going to magically wake up one day and do a complete 180 with your life all at once. If you hate doing something, like running or cycling, don't expect that success lies in your ability to become a runner or cyclist. Look for activities you already enjoy or have been interested in. Like to dance?

Take a [Zumba](#) class. Like to walk? Take up hiking. Like being around people? Take a group fitness class.

- **Don't wait for the "right time."** Many times I've heard people say that they'll start once the kids are in school, they get a better job, spring comes, things calm down a bit, and so on. If you subscribe to this line of thinking, there may never be a "right time" and you'll have spent your whole life waiting instead of living. We all know how time flies — before you know it, a week becomes a month and then another year has passed. Life's too short to put yourself on hold.

By Alison Heilig April 12, 2016

