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WEST ALABAMA

Why you should work out (especially when you don't want to)

Let's face it, it's hard enough to find the motivation to work out every day. But when it's cold outside, it's nearly impossible—especially for those of us who are more comfortable in the heat than the cold (i.e, most Southerners!).

Unfortunately, winter is also the time we most *need* to exercise. Exercise generates natural endorphins, which elevate your mood and naturally counteract the short, gloomy days of winter. Winter also brings the holidays, which come with their own fitness challenges: cornbread dressing, homemade chocolate chip cookies, and little Christmas candies everywhere, to name just a few.

So, where do you find the motivation to keep exercising when it's cold and dark and you'd rather be drinking hot cocoa? Here are a few tips to help you keep moving:

- **Remove obstacles.** Set your alarm the night before. Lay out your clothes, including outerwear. That way, you won't waste time looking for matching gloves or a hat. You'll be all set to jump into your clothes and run out the door.
- **Find a workout buddy.** Nothing makes us more accountable than having someone to answer to. Having someone who shares your interests – and ideally, your skill level – will not only help keep you motivated, he or she will help to make the workouts more enjoyable, too.
- **Join a class.** Much like having a workout buddy, joining a class makes you accountable and turns your workout into a social event. If it's a paid class, you may be even more driven to attend.
- **Learn a new sport or skill.** Working out can feel like a chore when you do the same thing every day. Why not use the “off season” to try something you've never done? Check out a Zumba class or try rock-wall climbing. Or use this time to work with a coach or trainer to improve your skills.
- **Invest in some new gear.** Just like the right outfit makes you feel more confident in social or professional situations, good workout gear makes you feel somehow more athletic. New shoes, a smartwatch, or fitness tracker can be a great investment in your overall health. But something as simple as a colorful hoodie or a pair of cushy socks could be all you need for a little boost.
- **Remember: there's no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing.** Speaking of gear, make sure yours is functional as well as fashionable! The right foundation layers, the right fabrics for warmth and wicking, and a hat (did you know you lose more than 10 percent of your body heat through the top of your head?) will make all the difference.

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The best part of the holidays is all that extra time. With no classes or homework to occupy your days, you'll have plenty of time to implement a workout regimen and still have time left to lounge on the couch and binge-watch all the shows you missed last semester.