Welcome to HEALTHYROADS!

In this monthly newsletter, you’ll find a collection of articles on popular health and wellness topics. If you’d like additional guidance and support in your quest to lose weight, improve nutrition, develop an exercise plan, reduce stress, or quit smoking and haven’t discovered our Weight Management, Tobacco Cessation, and Wellness programs, we encourage you to call us today. Some or all of these programs may have been purchased for you by your employer. To take advantage of all that Healthyroads has to offer, visit us online at www.healthyroads.com or call us toll-free at 877.330.2746.

Wellness and Healthy Living
Rx for a Goal Slump

You started the year off right—with a clear plan for a healthier you. Now you’re in a slump. The goal that seemed so exciting in the beginning is just another nagging chore on your “to do” list. Why did your will power fail you? And, more importantly, how can you get it back?

Before you blame your will power, consider this: Did you ever notice how will power is less a problem when you really want to do something? Research has shown that motivation is one of the real keys to sticking with a fitness goal. Believe it or not, you have a deep well of motivation to draw from. Here are 7 ways to tap it:

- **Track your progress in writing.** Keeping a log can spark your energy again. For example, set up a graph on your computer or put a star on your calendar for each successful day you have. Few things spur motivation as well as seeing that you’re getting somewhere.

- **Draw on past successes.** You’ve done hard things before. And you can do this. Let memories of past victories be your pep talk.

- **Find kindred spirits.** Bonding with someone who is on the same path as you can be a powerful boost to your resolve.

- **Go public.** If no one knows what you hope to do, it’s easier to give up. So tell your family and friends about your plan. Even on tough days, you won’t want to let down your biggest fans.

- **Revisit and revise.** Don’t be afraid to change your plan if you feel the need. You’ll likely be more motivated if your goal is clear, reachable, and meaningful for you.

- **Renew your commitment.** Think of a commitment as a muscle that weakens over time when it isn’t flexed. Renew your promise every day to keep it strong.

- **Throw yourself a bone.** If you just don’t feel like you can push yourself to walk 3 miles today, don’t give up entirely. Instead, try walking for 10 minutes. Everyone falls. But falling is not the same as failing forever. Yes, it’s tough to get back up again. But with helpful techniques and a positive attitude, you can get back to your goal. So don’t be too hard on yourself. If you’re down, you might just need to be patient, try out a new technique or 2 (or 3), and get excited about your goal again. Motivation, like self-improvement, is within your power.
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**Diet and Exercise**

**What Your Knees Need**

Your knees do a lot of work for you each day. Each step, each hop, even the moments you spend sitting involve your knees. And you likely don’t even think about them unless they start to hurt. You might notice knee pain when you:

- **Squat or kneel**
- **Go up or down stairs**
- **Sit for long periods of time**

Everyone—athletes and non-athletes, young and old—can experience knee pain. That’s because knee pain has so many possible causes. Some common causes are injury and overuse, as well as alignment problems and arthritis.

Likewise, the exact location of the pain can vary. It might be above, below, or to the side of the joint. Or it might be on the underside of the kneecap. But there are many simple things you can do to give your knees what they need.

- **Warm up.** Before you exercise, take the time to warm up your muscles gradually. Try some jumping jacks, or skip around while swinging your arms. Start with small motions and increase the range of motion as you warm up.
- **Lose excess weight.** More weight on your body makes your knees work harder. Losing just 5 percent of your body weight can help your knees and your whole body.
- **Stay strong.** Keep the muscles that support your knees strong. That includes muscles in your thighs and hips. Your doctor or a certified personal trainer can help you create workouts for these muscles. You can also check the exercise library on Healthyroads.com for leg exercises.
- **Use good form.** Some positions can cause or worsen knee pain. When you squat, make sure your knees stay directly over your toes. Don’t let them angle in or out as you squat. Work with your doctor or a certified personal trainer to learn the safest ways to move and lift.
- **Be smart about shoes.** Make sure your shoes fit well and support you. If your doctor suggests you use orthotics to correct your alignment, make sure you do so. Replace your workout shoes at least every 500 miles.
- **Don’t be too intense.** Build your workouts gradually. You don’t have to go from the couch to the marathon. Take your time, enjoy yourself, and let your body build the strength and skill it needs.

Your best bet is to avoid putting strain on your knee. But if you’ve already experienced sore knee joints, try applying ice and avoiding activities that cause pain. If you still feel pain in your knee(s) after a few days, you may wish to talk with your doctor or a physical therapist.

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**COACH TIP:**
Before any workout, warm up for at least 5 minutes. You might jog in place, swing your arms, or do jumping jacks. After your workout, while your muscles are nice and warm, do some gentle stretching.

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SERIOUS ABOUT QUITTING?

We at Healthyroads understand the challenges of quitting smoking. That’s why we offer a comprehensive Tobacco Cessation program that provides you with the best techniques to help you quit—once and for all. From our phone-based coaching program and educational materials to our online resources and nicotine replacement therapy products (if included in your benefit), we give you every chance to succeed. For anyone considering quitting smoking, take the first step and visit Healthyroads.com or contact us at 877.330.2746.

Quitting Smoking

How Tobacco Use Costs More Health Care Dollars

If you’re a smoker, you might not be the only one paying for your tobacco. How is that so? The latest numbers show that we spend $193 billion dollars on health care and lost productivity each year due to tobacco use.

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death. It’s known to contribute to such life-threatening conditions as:

- Cancer
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Emphysema
- Bronchitis
- Chronic airway obstruction
- Alzheimer’s Disease and vascular dementia

Right now about 1 in 5 Americans use tobacco. And about 1 in 5 deaths is due to a smoking-related disease.

That’s a lot of people dying because of their smoking habit. Each of those deaths likely piled up a lot of health care costs. And for every person who dies from a smoking-related cause, there are 20 people with a serious illness because of tobacco use.

That adds up to about $96 billion spent on tobacco-related health care each year. Much of that is paid by taxpayers through publicly-funded health programs created for those who may be disabled and no longer able to cover their own expenses.

There have been a few studies on the effect of tobacco use on health care costs. A Dutch study found that lifetime health care costs of nonsmokers were slightly higher than those of smokers. The reason, they found, is that the nonsmokers live more than 10 years longer than smokers.

Another study done with a Washington HMO looked at health care costs over 7 years of patients who smoked, those who had never smoked, and those who had quit smoking. No surprise, those who did not smoke had the lowest cost of health care. Those who quit smoking had an increased cost of care the following year. Often the choice to quit smoking comes after a serious health event. But in the following years, the quitters’ costs dropped enough to more than cover the first year’s increase.

And then there is the cost to those who don’t smoke but are exposed to the smoke from others. Secondhand smoke can be just as deadly as lighting up. Each year there are 46,000 deaths from heart attacks related to secondhand smoke exposure. And it can claim another 3,400 nonsmoker deaths from lung cancer.

But what the health care costs don’t take into account is how smoking affects the quality of your life. How much money would you pay for another 10 years with your loved ones? What is the going rate per breath? A recent survey showed that about 2 out of 3 smokers admitted that they wanted to quit. This year, half of them will try to quit. Will you be one of them?
Low-Stress Living
Meditation and Pain

What if learning to meditate could help you feel less pain? Meditation has long been thought to affect how our mind responds to things. Recent studies have looked at how our brain reacts when we’re in pain, and whether or not we can change that.

A study in 2011 looked at the brain scans of 15 people as they were feeling pain. Researchers applied heat to a spot on the subjects’ legs and asked them to rate how much it hurt. Next, they gave the same subjects 4 lessons in mindfulness meditation, which involves keeping the mind on the present moment.

No one in the group had ever meditated before. Each of the subjects went through 4 lessons of 20 minutes each. They were told to sit up straight, close their eyes, and focus on how their breath felt at the tips of their noses. Then they were asked to notice thoughts and feelings as they happened, but to bring their focus back to their breath without judging the thought or feeling.

Then researchers did the pain study again.

The results? After the meditation training, the people felt less pain and didn’t feel as upset about the pain they did feel. The study showed that their brains acted differently during meditation. This means mindfulness meditation may change how our brains receive and respond to pain. In this study, subjects reported 40 percent less pain when they used mindfulness meditation.

There have been other studies on how this ancient art can help people deal with pain. But those studies often involved people who had meditated for years. The 2011 study shows that even beginners may benefit from meditation.

Could this timeless discipline help you? Talk with your health care provider about how you might benefit from meditation. Once you’re ready to get started, videos, articles, and classes can show you the way.

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