

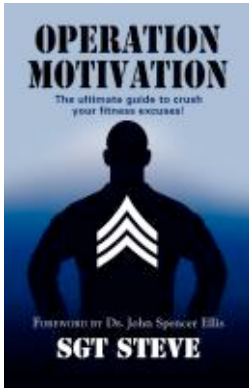
OPERATION MOTIVATION

The ultimate guide to crush
your fitness excuses!



FOREWORD BY Dr. John Spencer Ellis

SGT STEVE



Are you ready to stuff your excuses into the pockets of your 'fat pants' and ship them off to the thrift store? Operation Motivation is where the sugar coating ends and real change begins. SGT Steve will help you transform your life by taking your level of health and fitness to new heights. If you want a wake up call, and are ready to get the results you want, this is the book for you.

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SGT Steve

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First Edition

Preface

Monday morning, the alarm goes off. It's still dark outside and you are wrapped up in your blankets on a warm and comfy bed. You told yourself that *today* would be the day you got up and worked out. *Today* would be the beginning of a new journey. However, just before you get up out of bed the 'Excuse Monster' snuggles up next to you and whispers little things into your ear like this:

'You can always start tomorrow.'

'It's going to be a stressful day, you could use an extra hour of sleep.'

'New Years is only 7 weeks away, you can start then.'

'I'll work out after I get off work.' (#1 reason my own 'Excuse Monster' gives me)

'Summer is still months away, you have PLENTY of time to get in shape so you can look hot in a bikini.' (for the record, this is NOT something my Excuse Monster has told me.)

'Wait until.....(insert lame reason here)''

'I'm soooooo tired.'

'What's the point? Exercise is a waste of time....and it hurts!''

You give into the temptation of staying in the warm bed vs. the hassle and pain of getting out of bed. You hit the snooze and

fall back asleep. The score is Excuse Monster: 1 You: 0. The rest of the day you feel guilty because you failed to do what you set out to do.

Up until now, you may have never heard the term ‘Excuse Monster’ before, but you certainly know who it is. We have an amazing ability to talk ourselves out of taking action to improve our health and fitness. I call this the ‘Excuse Monster’. For some of you, it is the main decision maker in your life. Because you have chosen to listen to your own Excuse Monster you are probably not at a level of health and fitness that you want and need to be. The fact that you have this book shows you are ready to kill that damn Excuse Monster once and for all!

Unfortunately, there is no way to kill the Excuse Monster. It will always be lurking around, ready to sneak attack at any moment. In fact, my own Excuse Monster kept me from sitting down and writing this book much sooner. Even today I had to deal with him giving me all kinds of stall tactics to keep my fingers off the keyboard. Finally I sat down and started typing, and the Excuse Monster’s influence over me faded. The only way to defeat the Excuse Monster is through ACTION. You can’t think it away. With repeated action you can and will weaken it until it becomes an annoying nuisance instead of a barricade. Like I said before, I still deal with the Excuse Monster on a daily basis. My internal dialog is often like this prior to a workout:

“Listen Steve, you did lift pretty heavy yesterday and you are not 18 anymore.....do you really think you should push yourself today? You can always do it tomorrow. Besides, it is a perfect day to watch a movie and just chill out. You have had a hard week at work and really don’t need the extra stress of

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trying to squeeze a workout into what is supposed be a relaxing day.....blah, blah blah....”

Have you read enough of that nonsense? Just typing it makes me realize how ridiculous yet EFFECTIVE our excuses are at keeping us stuck where we are. Even now, after years of exercising I still have this discussion with myself about once a week or so. The difference between who I was (overweight, unhappy, unhealthy) and who I am now (healthy weight, happy, healthy) is that I shut off the conversation, got off my ass, and I did what I needed to do more often than not. Sometimes I still let that tricky Excuse Monster stop me, but I am getting better and better each time I defeat it. And with each defeat comes more self confidence, self esteem and wellness.

One of the keys to defeating the Excuse Monster is to be aware of its presence. One of the easiest ways to recognize that you are dealing with the Excuse Monster is when the words ***tomorrow***, ***later***, and ***someday*** cross your mind. As soon as you think about postponing a workout you are headed into troubled waters. At that point you have two options:

1. Allow yourself to be defeated by this excuse.
2. Take action and do the right thing.

It's that simple. Not easy, but simple. With a little honest reflection, you know if you are fooling yourself. Just because the Excuse Monster is slick and sneaky, it does not mean that we should continue to allow ourselves to fall into its traps.

The more you are able to recognize when your own Excuse Monster is attacking, the better prepared you will be to ignore it and move forward. I believe that debates with the Excuse

Monster are futile. Why? Because the Excuse Monster is part of you and arguing with yourself seems a bit silly doesn't it? Sometimes a healthy inner discussion is a good thing when it comes to making major life decisions or weighing the pros/cons of various choices we face each day. However, if you are serious about the quality of your health and fitness, there is no need for an inner committee meeting to discuss and analyze whether or not you should work out. The bottom line is that if you want to be lean, fit and healthy, you have to exercise and eat right. No if, ands or buts about it! Tell yourself to be quiet and hit the weights!

Remember, I said that defeating the Excuse Monster is simple, not easy. Throughout this book I will provide you with weapons that you need to win battle after battle against your own Excuse Monster. The more you practice them, the better you will become. The intent of this book is not to make you hop out of bed excited and delighted to exercise, but it will assist you in getting up and doing what you need to do. The same will hold true for developing and maintaining healthy eating habits. Each chapter will help you to find ways to get and maintain motivation to achieve the fitness goals you set. I will even guide you in creating and setting goals to work towards. I am not a cheerleader. I'm not here to give you cheesy motivation via cute quotes and fluffy stories. I am a leader and coach. I am here to get you fit and healthy. I have never heard a player thank the cheerleaders after winning a championship. They thank the coach. The coach is not there to hold the players hands and coddle them. They are there to lead players to victory. The coach is not there to win a popularity contest. This book is about winning. It is about winning a better life for yourself. It's about facing your laziness head on and dealing with it. It's about stuffing all your excuses into your fat pants and throwing

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them in the trash. It's about finally getting the results you want. It's about gaining a new and better life through positive changes in behavior.

Writing this book has been much more of a challenge than I expected. There have even been times where I considered quitting. However, I simply cannot quit on something I believe is so important. I believe the message and guidance within this book has the power to change many lives for the better. I have never felt so passionate about any work related project in my life.

Here is why I wrote this book and more importantly, why you should read and take action on it:

1. **There is a vital need for this book.** There is a gigantic hole in the health, wellness and fitness world. Go to a local book store and step into the 'Diet' section. The number of diet books is overwhelming. There are hundreds upon hundreds of books that all claim they are the answer. Now, turn around and look at all the exercise books in the 'Exercise' section. There is book, after book, after book of fitness programs that promise to get you into the best shape ever. Finally, go to the 'Fitness Motivation' section. After you have walked around the store three times looking for it I'll give you a hint: There isn't one! Last night I did an internet search on 'Fitness Motivation Books'. There are a few out there, but they looked quite long and complicated. Some focused on 'sports psychology' and not so much on everyday fitness, while others dove deep into psychology and behavior theories. Personally, I don't think you need a lesson in psychology to get fired up enough to stand up, toss the milkshake in the trash, and do some exercise. There has to be simple and effective strategies that will work. So, if you

are looking for complex theories and tons of research data (which is often conflicting), then this is probably not the book for you. This is a common sense guide for people seeking practical advice on improving their lives through health and fitness. When I initially began this book, it was going to simply be a book on motivation. However, as my knowledge base, experience and overall philosophies of wellness grow and evolve, I wanted to take it in a new and deeper direction. Yes, I am going to provide you some serious firepower to get motivated, but even more importantly, I will teach you how to build a new and healthier life that not only helps you look better, but will truly improve the quality of your life in many other areas. I am not just going to get you onto your feet, I'll help you keep standing and moving forward.

2. I used to be out of shape. I have not always been the fitness coach I am today. I was once overweight, depressed, anxious (on antidepressants/anti-anxiety medicine), unhappy, unmotivated, undisciplined, negative, and careless. I smoked and chewed tobacco. I drank way too much alcohol. I ate junk food most of the time. I looked and felt miserable. Perhaps you feel that way right now. When it comes to stupid and bad habits, I am an expert thanks to years of trashing my health. Because I know what it's like, I can empathize with you and help get you to where I am today. If you are frustrated and hurting, please know the message and guidance in this book will help you. I was a miserable wreck before I chose to make big changes in my life. Today I am healthy, fit, vibrant, energized, fired up, excited, lean, off medicine, off tobacco, off alcohol (I am not attacking alcohol, it's just not for me), inspired and downright motivated to share this with others. It's why I am writing this book instead of watching t.v., having a beer or baking cookies.

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Because I decided and took action on changing my life through simple and effective actions, I am a new person.

3. **I have screwed up.** Even after ‘seeing the light’ and getting into shape, I have had a few stumbles and downright collapses when it comes to keeping on the path of wellness. In July 2009, I started a home fitness program called P90X. In 90 days, my wife and I went from flabby to fit. But shortly after we finished our 90 day round old habits slowly crept back in. A ‘one time only’ night of drinking became much more frequent. Water was traded for soda. Healthy food went to the wayside so I could eat more pizza, wings, and chips. I even started using tobacco again. My results started to slip and in no time I was in a tailspin. This only lasted about a month and I got back onto track. About 7 months later I had to stop exercising in order to have a hernia repair surgery. I was crushed. I had finally gotten into excellent shape and now I had to stop working out until a few weeks after the surgery. I once again started back to old habits, especially in the week and months that followed the operation. I would get motivated to get back on track for a few days or even a couple of weeks and then I would find myself right back on my couch with a beer in one hand and pizza roll in the other. By December 2010, I was a wreck. I was miserable and had added 3 inches of pure fat back onto my stomach. I knew that getting back on track was the answer, but I just could not find the motivation to stick with anything more than a week or so. I kept saying ‘Next week I’ll get this ball rolling again.’ Finally in January 2011, I got off my tail and rededicated myself to a healthful lifestyle. This time it has been different. I have had a different mindset, attitude and strategy which is why I remain on track more than ever today. I will share this powerful strategy with you in this book. I believe it will help you bounce back from slip ups just like I have. We are all going

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to mess up. What matters is how we handle it. The mental and emotional aspects of fitness are just as important and the physical ones.

4. I know what I am doing. Shortly after my own fitness transformation began I decided to dedicate my professional life to helping others get fit and healthy. Over the course of two years I earned several certifications in fitness and nutrition. I also began to coach and lead people on their own journeys towards better health and smaller jeans. This professional education/experience coupled with over a decade of being a leader in the Army allows me to provide those I work with sound guidance, inspiration, and motivation. My passion for helping others will be evident as you read this book. I want you to succeed. I want you to have a life full of energy, vibrance, fun, and meaning. The key to earning this kind of life is through nutrition, exercise, and a healthy/positive outlook on life. I have gotten to the point where I see so much frustration, pain, and sadness due to people being unhealthy that I feel I **MUST** write this book. I am compelled to help others out of the darkness created by fad diets, crappy products, and lies created by Hollywood, pop culture and sadly - the fitness industry. Parts of the fitness industry are a mess and I'm bringing a big ole' broom of truth to sweep that trash out of your life. I don't have all the answers, but I can detect when something does **NOT** work, and I will help you avoid those pitfalls.

This book will be divided into two sections:

Getting Motivated - This is where you must start if you want to have any kind of lasting results. We all do things and avoiding doing things for a reason. The way to get started in any kind of positive life change is to build up a strong set of

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reasons. The more reasons you have to get fit, the better. I will cover in detail how to create and focus on your own reasons to take action and change your life for the better. This will include setting realistic and challenging goals to give you something to work towards. Purpose is the fuel we need for the fire of motivation.

Staying Motivated - The motivation to get started will be accomplished by finding your purpose and setting goals. However, keeping the course will require some extra tactics and behaviors. There will be setbacks, illnesses, plateaus, vacations, stress, and many other curve balls that life will throw at you. These are like water being thrown onto your fire that you have worked hard to build. Having some tools in your possession to keep these distractions to a minimum will keep you moving forward. When someone loses 50 pounds, I am happy for them. When someone loses 50 pounds and a year later they have kept it off and they are happy and loving life, I am overjoyed for them. I will address common attacks by the Excuse Monster and how to handle them. You will learn how to maintain and keep the fire burning. Like it or not, it takes a change in lifestyle (not just eating right and exercising) to remain fit and healthy. People try to avoid this truth and find themselves slipping up over and over without any idea why. If you are a yo-yo dieter or an 'Exercise & eat perfect all week/Party and eat like crap all weekend' person, this section is going to help you out a lot. I will also include ways to improve your attitude and overall sense of wellbeing through how you perceive yourself and the world around you. There is no point in getting into great shape if you are stressed out, negative, and unhappy. There are some pretty fit looking people that are miserable because they have neglected their mental state of wellness. Don't worry, I'm not going to pound you with a bunch of psycho-babble. I'm simply

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going to provide you with some suggestions, ideas and resources to lead you to a more positive and less stressed out mindset.

This book is going to get intense at times. It has to if it is going to be effective. I am putting my heart into this because I am convinced that if you apply what you learn here, you can truly have a much better life. In order to do that, I need to get real and personal with you. I am going to lead you places that may make you uncomfortable. I may even make you feel downright upset and angry. Take down your defenses and let the message really reach you. Let it hit you right where it needs to hit. We often are not truly ready to change until the pain of staying the same is worse than the pain to take action. If I come across as harsh, just know it is because I want this to set the fire of change inside of you. Several months from now, I want to get an email from you telling me how happy and satisfied you are with your new life. In order to really make an impact, I am going to have to give some of you a reality check that you may just feel like a slap across the face with a cold dead fish. I will attack behaviors and mindsets, not people. Nothing I write is intended to be personal. It is intended to help you see things from a new perspective.

Part 1: Getting Motivated

Introduction

Motivation is often misunderstood. There are many different theories out there on what works and what doesn't work. Even in my own life I struggle with motivation. I believe part of our nature is to find the easy way through things. I think most people would rather ride a bicycle two miles downhill rather than one mile uphill (even though riding uphill is better for you). Not only is it in our nature to seek the path of least resistance, our culture pounds us with fitness and nutrition marketing that promises things like 'Product X will help you lose weight without changing how you eat or doing any exercise'. It does sound tempting and unfortunately people fall for it every day. It is easier to sit on the sofa than it is to exercise. The more we advance with technology, the easier life has become. People want an 'Easy Button' when it comes to losing weight and getting healthy. I'm here to tell you, there isn't one.

People often look at motivation as a feeling, like a magic emotion that will make them want to exercise. Once again, that just isn't going to happen. Motivation is mistaken as wanting to do something, but actually it is not that simple. I am highly motivated to finish the book I am writing, but that does not mean I am actually excited to do it. Sitting down and writing can feel like a chore. The same holds true for exercise. Some days I do look forward to working out. Especially when it is a workout I enjoy. But there are also days where there are 1,000,001 other things I would rather do than exercise. If I only exercised when I was in the mood, I would work out about 5

times a year. So if you are looking for a potion that will make you love exercise, good luck finding it. I am not saying that you won't eventually grow to like exercise or even love it. When motivation and desire meet, it creates something special. It happens for me every once in a while, and I love it! Sometimes I really get into a workout and it is a powerful experience. That is more than motivation. That is pure passion. However, for the most part, my workouts are not something I am excited and thrilled about. I do them anyways. You don't need to feel like doing something to have motivation. For example, right now if you were on fire would you be motivated to find some water fast to put out the flames as fast as possible? I imagine so! Would it matter whether or not you felt like it? Of course not. You do whatever it takes to put out that fire regardless of how you feel. Now, don't get me wrong. Starting a new fitness program can be exciting and fill you with optimism. That is a good thing. But what happens if you don't have that excitement? That's what this book is about. It's about how to get past that darn Excuse Monster so you can get the results you want.

So if motivation isn't exactly a feeling, what is it? Motivation is simply having a damn good reason to do something (or not do something). I have developed a mindset and attitude that the long term benefits of exercising and eating right are more important to me than the short term benefits of being lazy and eating junk food. I don't work out because I feel like it. I work out because of how it makes me feel. Most people do not have their priorities straight. I know I didn't prior to my own transformation from flabby to fit. Once my sense of purpose in life changed, so did my priorities, my behaviors and ultimately my life. I am motivated to look and feel my best. That is not so much an emotion but a mindset. I refuse to go

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back to the miserable and unhealthy person I was. I am motivated to keep improving my level of health and fitness because of how it has changed and enhanced my life. I am full of purpose, and that's what motivates me. Let's find your purpose, because once you do, the motivation will follow.

Chapter 5: The Canyon

For most people, starting a new fitness program can be an exciting new journey. There is a positive sense of anticipation as you think about getting some great results. Perhaps you have just purchased a gym membership, ordered a home fitness program, or signed up for a boot camp. Whatever the process, you are fired up and ready to get fit! Week one: you are sore, tired and worn out, but you still have that initial surge of motivation keeping you going. Week two: it's getting a little better, but you are starting to wonder if the hard work will pay off. Week three: you step on the scale. You have not lost a pound. All that hard work, all those workouts, all that pain, all that sacrifice, all that effort....for what?!?!? You are now in what I call *the canyon*. Do not mistake the canyon for a plateau. A plateau is when progress stops after having measurable results. I'll cover plateaus later. The canyon is much more dangerous than a plateau. The canyon causes many people to quit before they ever get a chance to experience the true benefits of exercise. It has derailed me more than once. To put it simply, the canyon is the delay between your hard work and results. It is the time when the payoff does not equal the effort. You feel like you are getting nothing out of all that you have invested.

Think about high school. Did you get your diploma a week into your freshman year? Of course not. You had to invest the time and effort to graduate. The same holds true for fitness. Trust me, I have been in the canyon more than once. I know the frustration it causes. You have busted your ass in the gym, eaten damn near perfectly and there are no results to show for it. At least it seems that way. Read on....

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The canyon is natural and part of getting fit and healthy. Not everyone starting a fitness program will experience it. But for those who do, it's something that needs to be dealt with head on. The canyon is frustrating because you have made some serious behavioral changes. You are exercising, eating healthfully and doing what you were taught are the right things. You expect and rightfully deserve results that are in proportion to your efforts. The canyon is made even worse by a culture rooted in an '***I want results instantly***' mentality. I'm guilty of wanting instant results myself. Television shows that show people having tremendous weight losses week after week does not help this situation out at all. Even worse, there are certain types of extreme dieting and exercise programs that actually get rapid results. Clever fitness marketers target people who are looking for a quick fix. People love the idea that they can lose two dress sizes in a week. Even if you did lose two dress sizes in a week, it's not what true health and fitness is about. Rapid results do not last and they end up putting on even more weight once you return to 'normal'. There are some screwed up 'Get thin quick' plans out there that are causing much more harm than good. To truly get into great shape it takes several months of work. For some it can take a year or longer. That is the reality of it. Yes, you can probably lose weight faster with a crash diet that makes you miserable, but it will not last.

The canyon is dark. It is frustrating. It is discouraging. It sucks! If and when you reach it, you need a light to get through it. That light can be going back to your purpose/goals and reminding yourself why it is so important to keep moving forward. Remember how I told you that you need a strong sense of purpose? You will need it to get through the canyon. It will act as a flashlight to guide you forward.

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Another light is trusting the guidance you have gotten. This is where you need some faith in the system/trainer/program that you are using. If you are doing the right thing and keep moving forward, the results will come. It's like a boomerang that vanishes from sight after you throw it. If you keep waiting for it, it will come back.

The real truth about the canyon is that it really isn't a canyon at all. When you look at it from a long term perspective like I wrote about earlier, you will see it's barely even a bump in the road. This is where expanding your perspective can be a big help to keeping you on the right path.

If you are doing the right thing, this dip into the canyon will pass within the first few weeks. Even if the scale does not budge, your clothes should start to feel looser, your energy will be increasing, your mood will improve, and you will generally feel better about yourself. If you are doing the right thing, you will get through it and get those results you deserve.

However, if something is off with your nutrition, exercise, or lifestyle, you may wind up spending a long time in the canyon. We have an amazing ability to *think* we are doing the right thing, but are actually engaging in behaviors that are holding up your progress. Get honest with yourself and see if you can identify with any of the common enemies to progress.

Nutrition

I believe many of the issues that accompany a lack of progress can be fixed by ensuring that you are properly nourishing your body. Here are some examples that can slow, stall or even reverse progress:

Following faulty guidance - If you are eating based on instinct, a diet you read in a magazine or some other half assed approach, it's time to get serious and do something that works. Nutrition is too critical of a component to do on your own. Please download my *Operation Nutrition* guide in order to learn how to eat in a healthy and productive manner.

Drinking too many calories - Liquid calories are sneaky little bastards that will hinder your progress. I had a client that was frustrated about not losing weight fast enough. I then found out that they were drinking sweet tea throughout the day. *Really?* You think that maybe drinking a few glasses of pure sugar a day may not be the best idea for losing fat? The same goes for sugary coffee drinks, soda, sports drinks, fruit juice, and energy drinks. Want to lose weight? Drink water. I used to have several sweet drinks a day and a nice big gut to match. I gave up the drinks and now I have visible abs. I believe there is definitely a correlation between the two. I am not saying that you have to completely give up a nice sweet drink now and then, but limiting it to once or twice a week is vital. Anything more is counterproductive.

Not eating enough - I bet this one caught you off guard! Not eating enough is a surefire way to cause your metabolism to slow down and turn your body into a fat STORING machine. Once again, by getting onto a healthy and realistic nutrition plan, you can avoid this trap. Being hungry all the time is a huge motivation killer.

Alcohol - I'll keep it simple. Want to lose weight as fast as possible (in a healthy manner)? Limit your alcohol to 1-2 drinks per week. Want slower results? Drink over three glasses of

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alcohol per week. I'm not anti-alcohol. It is just not a good thing when it comes to losing weight.

Too many treats - A treat here and there is fine. Deprivation does not work. However, neither does eating cookies whenever you have the urge. Like I mentioned earlier in this book, I eat roughly 90% healthy and allow myself about 5-15% of my other meals throughout the week to be less than stellar. There is no way I am going to go through life without cheesecake, Buffalo wings, or chips and salsa. But, they are occasional treats, not daily indulgences. If you find yourself eating snacks more than a couple of times a week, it's time to refocus and straighten out your priorities.

Here is a quick note of encouragement for you. I know from experience how tough it can be to make the necessary changes getting fit and healthy requires. At first it sucked trading my chips and salsa for fruits and veggies. Swapping water for soda was something else I was not pleased about. As time passed, I found myself craving these things less and less. I still have the occasional desire for some treats or a sweet beverage, but it is nothing like before. I will go more into this in the discipline vs. deprivation chapter. The bottom line is that it does get much easier to stay on course with a healthy eating plan the longer you follow it. Believe me, I love to eat tasty food and I refuse to lead people into a world of rice cakes and tofu! Just get through the first few weeks of eating right and the cravings and temptations will lose their power over you.

Exercise

Moving your body more is a good thing. Moving your body in a productive, safe and challenging way is great! As with

nutrition, if you are flying blind going on instinct, it is probably time to get yourself into a structured fitness program. Here are a few areas that can rob you of results which is not good for your motivation.

Inexperience - I have absolutely no clue how a car engine runs. I would not be able to tell the difference between a spark plug and a manifold. Okay, I'm not *that* clueless, but pretty close. When I have an issue with my van, I take it to a professional. If I got under the hood and started screwing around, I would probably make things worse. The same holds true for exercise. If you do not have much or any experience with exercise (especially the recent developments in exercise science), then it's best to seek counsel with a professional. This can be through a DVD program, hiring a personal trainer, buying a quality book on exercise, or attending a group fitness class. *Operation Action* goes into great detail on how to do just that. If you are lost, or just in need of a new direction, it will show you the way.

Starting off too fast - Many times people get excited about doing a new exercise routine and try to do too much too soon. Starting a new fitness program can be demanding on your body. When you start off you need to spend the first couple of weeks getting your body used to new movements and an increased workload. As with nutrition, you need patience here. As Tony Horton says in P90X, "Rome was not built in a day, and neither was your body." That is smart advice. So even when you are tackling a more rigorous program like P90X or kettlebell training, take the first 14 days or so to get used to it. Too much, too soon can lead to burnout, injury, and overtraining. Working a sore muscle is not a good idea. That old 1970's locker room 'wisdom' of working the soreness out of a muscle with more

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exercise is outdated and potentially dangerous. You will have plenty of opportunities to push and challenge yourself. Just be sure to ramp up gradually if you are a beginner. In fact, I started a new fitness program last week and I took it quite easy on myself. Could I have pushed harder? Probably, but I would rather avoid injury than to try and be a hero.

Not listening to your body I am all about shattering excuses and challenging you to get up and get moving. However, there are times when you should not work out. If you are sick, trying to do an intense workout can be counterproductive. When you are sick, your body needs all the energy it can get to fire up your immune system and heal up. The same holds true for soreness and injury. Working a muscle that has a slight ache is not a big deal. It is when you try to work out a sore or injured body part that you are walking down a slippery slope. Many injuries can be prevented by listening to your body. Instead of knocking out a 5 mile run when you have the flu try a one mile walk. This can be a tricky situation for many people because they can feel as though they are being weak or lazy when they take time off. Just to make it clear: I do not work out when I am sick, hurt or sore. If I am sore, I work out a different body part. If needed, I take off an extra day. Now, if you are an endurance athlete or professional athlete, you may push harder than the average person. This message is not for you. It's written for people who are looking to improve the overall shape they are in. The more fit you get, the more you will learn your limitations and boundaries. I am not advocating to always take it easy and never challenge yourself. Just make sure that when you do, your body is ready for it.

Investing the time to select an appropriate fitness plan and pacing yourself will ensure better results.

Compliance

You may have chosen the perfect eating plan and fitness program, but they won't do much good if you do not follow them. This is a common sense issue. A half assed effort will naturally yield half assed results. 80/20 is good. 90/10 is great. Get to at least 80% compliance if you want to see any real changes in your health and fitness.

Lifestyle

Often our lifestyle can have a much bigger impact on your results than you realize. The two main culprits in our lifestyle are a lack of sleep and how we deal with stress.

Lack of sleep - Some people seem to take pride in being able to function on low amounts of sleep. Wearing that badge is a recipe for getting stuck in the canyon. Everyone needs a proper amount of sleep, especially people engaged in exercise programs. If you regularly getting 6.5 hours or less of sleep per night, you may be in troubled waters. Sometimes there are things that cause us to lose sleep that are outside of our control (crying baby, late night thunderstorm, loud neighbors). However, other times our lack of sleep is within our control. The two of the biggest sleep thieves are the television and computer. If you are losing precious sleep so you can catch the late news, play a video game, or check your Facebook account, you should get your priorities straight. Consistently getting a good night of sleep is vital in being fit and healthy. Go to bed at a decent hour in a dark and quiet room. Your mind and body will thank you for it.

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Dealing with stress - We all have stress in our lives. Work, traffic, kids, school, money, and to top it off, now you have to find time to exercise thanks to SGT Steve kicking you in the pants. I deal with stress too. Some days I do better than others. Stress releases chemicals into our bodies that create an environment for fat storage. That is not a good thing at all. Occasional stress is normal and part of life. Unfortunately many people deal with chronic stress which not only slows fat loss, it creates other health problems like high blood pressure and sleep issues. By learning how to deal with stress in positive ways, you will feel much better. One of the simplest and easiest ways to deal with stress is to take several long and deep breaths. Since I practice yoga a couple of times a week I have gotten a lot better at taking full breaths. When you slow down and deepen your breathing, your body naturally begins to relax. It does not change the fact that some rude bastard just cut you off in traffic, but it will change your response to it. Find things in life that help you to feel relaxed. Things like sitting in a hot tub, getting a massage, reading a funny book, taking a nature walk, sitting by a fire, or taking a nap can all do wonders for your level of stress. And when it comes down to it, 99% of the stuff we let stress us out is quite meaningless in the grand scheme of things. It goes back to your perspective and how you see the world around you. Two people in the same traffic jam can have two totally different experiences. Person #1 is all wound up and ticked off. He is beating on the steering wheel while yelling at the cars around him. Person #2 throws in their favorite CD and sees it as a perfect opportunity to listen to some good music. Both people get to their destinations at the same time. Who do you think will have a more pleasant and productive day?

Let's say you have been in the canyon for a few weeks and you have not lost a single inch. Your clothes are just as tight as

when you started and you still feel lousy. If you can honestly say that you are eating based on a solid plan, exercising with a professional system, are getting 7-9 hours of sleep a night and are not feeling stressed out, you may be among the few who has a medical reason for your struggles. Here are a few that may affect you:

Medication

Just about every single medication now comes with a list of potential side effects. Many of them have possible weight gain as a side effect. Some are definitely worse than others. If you are on a medication(s), please talk to your doctor to see if it is the cause of your inability to lose fat. Do not, I repeat, do not take it upon yourself to stop or change your medication to see if that is the issue. Let a doctor decide which course of action to take.

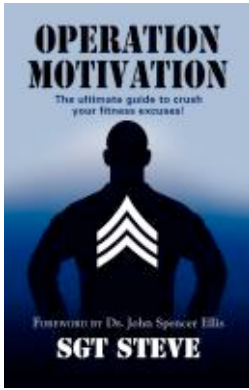
Hormones

When someone is unable to lose weight and they have been doing the right things, a doctor may want to run some tests to make sure your hormone levels are normal. For example, hypothyroidism can significantly slow your metabolism and make it difficult to lose any weight. Also, chronic crash dieting can also affect the endocrine system (glands) and impair weight loss. This reinforces the need to learn how to properly feed your body so that you do not permanently damage your glands.

This list of potential medical reasons can be quite long. The bottom line is that if you have done all that you can and are not getting results, seek medical advice from a doctor or a qualified healthcare professional.

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The main point of this chapter is that there are **no** shortcuts to getting healthy. There is no magic pill that will take your fat away. There is no miracle fitness program that will take you from a size 20 to a 2 in 6 weeks. I know you may see someone lose a lot of weight doing the latest crash diet or flavor of the week product, but those results do not last. To get fit and healthy it takes time and persistence. It takes discipline. It takes a sense of faith that what you are doing will work. I cannot do it for you. I can only tell you that the view from the other side is amazing. You can do it as long as you don't give up. The surest way to fail at fitness is to quit. The way to succeed is to keep moving forward, even if it feels like you are crawling. Keep going, the good stuff is just past the hard stuff.



Are you ready to stuff your excuses into the pockets of your 'fat pants' and ship them off to the thrift store? Operation Motivation is where the sugar coating ends and real change begins. SGT Steve will help you transform your life by taking your level of health and fitness to new heights. If you want a wake up call, and are ready to get the results you want, this is the book for you.

Operation Motivation

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