

Meet the MOTIVATORS

Wondering how to reach your healthy goals? Here, three experts who turned their lives around help you get fit, eat well and live positively



THE LIFE COACH

'Make one small change at a time'

Joanne Henson, 48, from Richmond, Surrey, hated exercise but is now a life, health and wellness coach.

At school, I was unbelievably uncoordinated, had no spatial awareness and could never catch a ball. I was always picked last for sports teams. My life changed when I finally found the form of exercise that was right for me and, from there, everything fell into place.

Of all the exercises I've tried over the years, lifting weights has been the most life changing. I'm strong, as well as fit, which makes me feel empowered. There are always opportunities to set new goals and enjoy the process of achieving them. It's also been the most effective in changing my weight, I'm now 10-and-a-half stone. The work I do now is so far removed from the insecure girl I was that I sometimes have to stop and pinch myself.

My turning point started at university when a friend made me understand that exercise didn't have to involve competition. I discovered



'Put a plan together and make a project of your goals'

cardio machines, which didn't require too much coordination. Being able to actually do something made the idea of exercise far more appealing.

After graduating, I moved to London and had a very good but unsatisfying career in IT. I was working ridiculous hours but always found time for cardio at the gym.

When I hit 40, any time not working was spent in the gym. I was becoming obsessed with cardio, but my attitude was wrong. I was doing it as punishment for my bad portion control. I could never just have one biscuit, I ate the whole packet. I ate far too many white carbohydrates and drank wine almost every day.

I knew I needed a change in my life, both in my career and the way I exercised. My goal was to be leaner but still have muscle definition. A personal trainer advised giving up the cardio because the amount I was doing was affecting my hormonal balance and putting increased stress on my body. I was 12 stone and I didn't feel good at that weight. I forced myself to go cold turkey and have never been on a treadmill since.

After my initial panic at stopping cardio, it was a relief not to be tied to such a strict exercise regime. I started

Transform your life for good

● **BE THE PILOT, NOT THE PASSENGER, OF YOUR LIFE.** Take responsibility. Have you just let life happen to you? Think about your career and relationships.

● **TURN YOUR GOALS INTO A PROJECT.** If you were at work and your boss gave you a task, you'd put a plan together and work out who was going to do what. That's exactly what you have to do with your life goal. Take weight loss. If you want to lose a dress size, how much weight do you think that's going to be and by when do you want to have lost it? Adopt the SMART goals approach: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

● **TRY DIFFERENT THINGS.** If an exercise regime didn't work, it's not you that was the problem, it was the approach you took. If you took up running but the first time it rained you thought, I don't want to get wet, then you've chosen the wrong exercise. It's often a case of changing course. There are dozens of ways to achieve something.

training with weights and kettlebells and within a year I'd lost 18 pounds.

I also booked three sessions with a life coach, just out of curiosity. She introduced me to the idea of making your life a project and taught me that I had to take responsibility for my own life and not just let it happen.

Initially, I made one small change. I became a voluntary mentor for Chance UK (chanceuk.com), a charity that organises mentoring for children with behavioural difficulties.

I wanted to do something that made a difference to someone. It was incredibly rewarding, and three years later I left my job to train as a life coach. More and more people came to me with health and fitness goals and I realised this was the area that inspired me.

I now work with people on their struggles with exercise and confidence issues around exercising as well as weight loss, healthy eating, fitness and healthy lifestyle choices. I help my clients progress their lives in the same way I did. I know that if I can go from having no physical confidence and a complete phobia of exercise, anyone can. It's taken years, but I finally have a career I love and an exercise regime that makes me feel good. ➔

Find your perfect exercise

● If you've never enjoyed exercise, ask yourself why? Don't force yourself back into something you've never liked, as you won't stick to it. Instead, analyse what you don't like about what you've been doing and use that knowledge to choose a completely different form of exercise.

● Don't be tempted to join a great gym that's a pain to get to. Find a gym that's local to you. Convenience is a big part of making an exercise regime work.

● Are you a social or solitary exerciser? If you enjoy exercising with friends, don't start running on your own. What other factors might encourage you? Music, maybe being part of a team or an exercise that doesn't feel like exercise, such as dancing?

● Don't ever think of exercise as punishment. It should be enjoyable. Find out more at joannehenson.co.uk

