

# Are You Suffering From A Motivation Hangover?

Sandie Fredriksson



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If you've already hit a wall with your 2020 health goals, it's time to re-examine your approach. Sandie Fredriksson shares her 10-point checklist on how to set and get the change you want.

'New Year, New You' might feel like a mildly irritating cliché, but there's good reason January is a popular time for setting goals. Much like starting your day with a healthy morning routine, beginning your year the right way can be an effective strategy to get healthier and happier.

Those first heady days and weeks of working on your goals feel exciting. You're hitting the gym three times a week, replacing every lunch with a nutrition-packed smoothie and you've successfully denied yourself chocolate for 11 days straight (that's about 10 days too long for me!). But soon enough the "Old You" is back on the sofa making excuses to skip the gym or stay up late on a Monday to watch just one more episode of Messiah.

It's at this point we realise that willpower alone is a pretty unreliable strategy - and when the motivation starts to melt away, it can leave you feeling deflated and depressed.

So if you are suffering from a motivation hangover, or you haven't yet kick-started your 2020 health goals, here's my checklist to help you get on track.

## *1. Don't make it about a massive life overhaul*

Think about where you're starting from. If you've never set foot in a gym, don't aim to be there five days a week. Start with twice a week, until you're used to identifying with that behaviour. By staying consistent, "I go to the gym Tuesdays and Thursdays" will become who you are, not what you do.

Trying to work on too many goals at once is a popular mistake. I encourage clients to pick one or two, to begin with, then we focus on the habits that will drive that outcome rather than the end goal itself. It will surprise you how the smallest of habit changes can create tangible results really fast. Before you know it, you'll have set yourself on a whole new health trajectory.

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### *2. Be specific about what your goal is*

There is a meaningful difference between “I’m going to start running” and “I will run a 5K by June”, or “I’m going to have a healthier diet” and “I’ll eat five homemade vegetarian meals a week”. The detail matters, otherwise how will you know when you have got there? Get specific on what you want and how you will measure it. Also, ask yourself: is that goal achievable in the timeframe you have set? When a client comes to me with an unrealistic goal, we work to adjust it at the outset, breaking it down into manageable chunks.

### *3. Understand why you want to achieve that outcome*

The gratification of losing weight is not going to be as immediate as the gratification of eating one of the cupcakes your kids just baked! So, if you want to stay on track, you really need to dig deep into your motivations. Why do you want it? How will it feel when you get it? How will it change your life for the better? Asking yourself these questions can sometimes mean you need to reframe your goal in some way. Perhaps you didn’t actually want to be a vegetarian - you just wanted to eat less meat and more plant-based meals.

### *4. Don’t worry about what anyone else is doing*

Your friend might be posting on Instagram about how she gets up at the crack of dawn every Saturday morning for a military boot camp on the heath, but if you struggle to get up in the mornings, and react badly to being shouted at, and live nowhere near the heath, then that isn’t necessarily going to be your best plan to get fit. Be realistic about what feels manageable and make a plan that works in the context of your life.

### *5. Write your goals down*

When I work with my clients to turn their written plan of action, everything changes. You’re far

more likely to follow through when you can see what you have to do, rather than just thinking about it. Make your schedule non-negotiable by building the rest of your week, around it. There may not be time to do everything, but there’s always time to do the important things. And by important things, I mean prioritising your health.

### *6. Take bold action*

Commit to your goals by investing in them from the get-go. Book in your training sessions and pay for a block upfront, so cancelling them isn’t an option. Or take a cookery course as a pledge to yourself that you won’t give in to the temptation of takeaways anymore. To bring your dreams to life there needs to be a hefty bias towards action. Put your energy into the ‘doing’ rather than the ‘thinking about it’.

### *7. Don’t rely on willpower*

On-off dieting, juice fasts, sporadic gym visits: I remember how disheartening it is when anything you try feels unsustainable. Pretty soon, you’re back to your old ways of doing things, wondering if you’re ever going to get in control of your health. Spoiler alert: your brain loves to keep you in repeating behaviours (even the ones that don’t serve you) which is why it can be tough to break negative habit loops alone. A coach, mentor or trainer will not only help you find the fastest, most direct route to your goal, they’ll also hold you accountable to following through. And a skilled coach will know exactly how to rewire your brain with new behaviours that feel easy so your old ways become obsolete.

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Whatever your goal - lose weight, get healthier, save  
more, drink less, find love - the pursuit of perfect will  
paralyse you! You don’t need the perfect plan to get  
started and there’s never a right time.”

#### 8. *Track your progress*

Often, clients find ticking off their daily achievements on a habit tracker an incredibly powerful way to stay on course. Your final goal might take some time to achieve so reward yourself along the way. Swap your three-a-day latte habit for a luxurious massage at the end of the month to keep you motivated! But don’t punish yourself up if you do slip. Resilience is the key to your success, so ditch the guilt and negative self-talk and jump straight back to the plan at the first opportunity.

#### 9. *Grow your self-awareness*

Does it sometimes feel like you’re cheating behind your own back? You know, like if you eat that slice of cheesecake really quickly, you might not notice, or if you miss that HIIT class, you can pretend it didn’t happen. By paying attention to your internal dialogue you will start to notice what it sounds like when you’re sabotaging your goals. This means having a strategy for when you don’t feel like sticking to your plan: just because your gym kit is packed and you’re all fired up and ready to hit Barry’s Bootcamp after work tomorrow, doesn’t mean you’ll feel like it when the time comes. Be prepared to not let that stop you.

#### 10. *Check in with how you’re feeling*

Does it feel like you’re growing or suffering? If it feels too restrictive, or just too damn boring, it’s not going to be sustainable. Dread going to the gym? Try a boxing class or join a climbing centre, or whatever you think could excite you. Don’t like your PT? Change to someone you actually want to spend time with three times a week. I look forward to working out with my trainers at Ellis Stockwell Personal Training - they’re fun and genuinely invested in my progress. Going there has become part of the fabric of my life, so work out what that looks like for you.

The biggest lesson I’ve learned in my 40s? Whatever your goal - lose weight, get healthier, save more, drink less, find

love - you don’t need the perfect plan to get started and there’s never a right time. The pursuit of perfect will paralyse you!

What you think is the best strategy at the beginning usually needs several tweaks along the way. And how much could you have achieved by now if you had just got going rather than waiting for the perfect time? A quieter week at work, or when you’ve finally got on top of your life admin, or - God forbid - when the kids leave home for good. What if they never do?!

Women, in particular, can be guilty of trying to clear the decks of all other responsibilities before we finally make time to work on ourselves. But life is always going to get in the way. So make this your new mantra: ‘Done is better than perfect.’ Value making progress over having it all figured out with the perfect plan.

To find out more about ‘The 8 Week Plan - Healthy Habits For Life’ visit [sandiefredriksson.com](http://sandiefredriksson.com)



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