

Springing

INTO action

'What a beautiful morning to be out!' she called as she ran by.

In sunshine and melting frost, with breath muffled by a woolly scarf, I agreed. As she passed, I thanked her for the beam of sunshine she brought into my day.

A greeting, a smile, a friendly word is just what was needed. When you're getting back into morning exercise after too long a break, you take all the encouragement you can find.

It has been too easy to stay in a warm bed on winter mornings, with plenty of excuses at hand, but deciding to break the habit is a bold challenge that I'm ready for.

Why am I doing this? There are all sorts of sensible reasons around staying healthy, but what really underpins the motivation is my new grandson, Jack. As he grows, I want to be fit and flexible to play with him. Sometimes personal change needs a reason that is bigger than we are.

It's taken me several years to undo my fitness, so I'm under no illusions that the repair will be a quick fix. What I do know, though, is that every step in the right direction is positive.

On my bathroom mirror, updated daily in liquid chalk, are reminders of why this matters, as well as strategies to keep me going. Perhaps they might be useful for you too.

Keep Your Eye on the Prize. There's a photo of Jack on my mirror, updated each week as he grows. The prize is to be able to keep up with him once he's really mobile. For now, the smiles that light up his face when he sees me are my reward. Last week a friend described herself as a Bold Granny, climbing trees and running races with her grandchildren. "If I'm heading into my second childhood," she said, "then I want to do it alongside those in their first!"

What is your prize? Is it bold enough to inspire you? Is it outrageous enough to make the effort worthwhile? What if you don't reach your prize? Is the risk of regret a prod you'd rather avoid?

Don't Break the Chain. Deciding to make change is easy - the hardest part is sticking with it. Consistency, when other tempting possibilities make it all seem too hard. There are bound to be late frosts and wild wet mornings when walking is the last thing I want to do.

Do you remember the chain letters that did the rounds when we were young? Apparently, it was bad luck to break the chain, so we'd be sitting at the dining table, copying out letters and begging Mum for stamps and envelopes. A load of superstitious nonsense - unless it's useful.

This chain, a number on my mirror, logs the number of walking days done in a row. It's my winning streak, a personal accountability meter and missing one day resets the counter to zero. It's my way to ward off the excuses, because keeping the chain going here matters. Starting from zero every time I miss a day means that I'm letting myself down and when it comes right down to it, the promises I make to myself are the ones that are most worth keeping.

Whether the commitment is big or small, stickability is essential, with willpower a muscle that needs training and replenishing. What tricks and treats keep you on track?

Count the Gratitude Moments. Each day I'm grateful for three things that support my walking progress. On my list this morning are the cheerful runner, the new walking shoes that are becoming more comfortable by the day and the noticeably lighter, early morning sky as spring approaches.

Practicing gratitude is a gift that multiplies. As Zig Ziglar wrote, 'Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for.'

Who would have thought that deciding to go walking in the morning could have such broad and bold implications! Somehow, though, it is that depth of meaning that makes it easier to stay committed.

So, how are you springing into action? And is your real reason strong enough to keep you moving?



Author, Jenny Magee works with women to make the most of the second half of their lives. Her latest book **A Bold Life - How Boomer Women are Reinventing Life Beyond Fifty** is available at good bookstores or from www.jennymagee.com. If you are looking to make significant changes, contact Jenny via email to jenny@jennymagee.com

