

# Decode (and Defuse) Your Exercise Excuses

**IF FINDING EXCUSES** to skip workouts made us fitter, we'd all be triathletes. Sports psychology consultant Kristen Dieffenbach, PhD, at West Virginia University, says we avoid exercise because "we've robbed it of any joy. We've transformed it from a natural, stress-relieving activity to something we have to schedule, plan, and create goals for. In other words: another form of stress." Here, some common exercise excuses, and advice on ditching them once and for all.

**TOO MANY WOMEN** put their jobs, obligations, and the people they care for before themselves, says Dieffenbach. "Most wouldn't say out loud, 'I am not as important and I don't deserve the time,' yet that's the only way to translate their actions." Try justifying regular trips to the gym by reminding yourself that unless your needs are met, you'll have trouble meeting the needs of the people counting on you. "Self-care is key to caring effectively for others," says Dieffenbach. "If a friend called and requested some of your time, you'd make it available. Be that kind of friend to yourself."

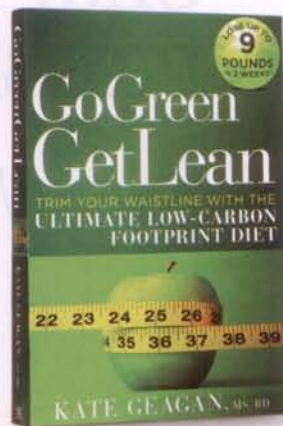
**"FIRST YOU HAVE** to realize that there are two types of energy—physical and mental—and that they feed off each other," says New York City-based trainer Kacy Duke, author of *The Show It Love Workout*. "Chances are, you're mentally tired from sitting at your job all day, and you need to get your blood circulating to rev your engine again," she says. "Tell yourself, *I will do just ten minutes*. And grant yourself permission to call it quits if you're still slogging after ten full minutes. Eventually, you'll make the connection that feeling tapped out means you need to move more, not less."

**PREDICTING FAILURE** is a classic way of protecting yourself, says Dieffenbach: "Rule out success, and you don't have to try." Find out what's behind your pessimism by listing the negative thoughts that occur when you picture yourself exercising, she says. One common roadblock is a fear of failure; a new routine can be daunting. If you're put off by the thought of setting up an effective—and safe—workout, consider spending a bit extra on a personal trainer to get you through the challenging first few weeks of an exercise regimen. —SELENE YEAGER

"I'm already too busy—I can't deal with one more thing I'm 'supposed' to do."

"How can I exercise when I'm always tired?"

"I'll start out gung ho, but I know I'll get bored and quit."



## Lean and Green

**"THE AMERICAN DIET** is the SUV of eating styles," says Kate Geagan, registered dietitian and author of the new book *Go Green Get Lean*. Geagan reports that eating the average American diet creates 2.8 tons of carbon dioxide emissions yearly, surpassing the 2.2 tons each of us generates by driving a car. Her new plan reduces weight *and* our carbon footprint. "They're naturally aligned," she says. For example:

- Raising beef accounts for 18 percent of global warming emissions worldwide. If for one day you switch to the vegetarian meals Geagan suggests, you'll save roughly 890 calories and nine pounds of carbon. Do this for two weeks, and you'll reduce your carbon footprint by 122 pounds and your calories by 12,460—leaving yourself about three and a half pounds lighter.
- Manufacturing the amount of sugar the typical American eats in a year—150 pounds' worth—releases 855 pounds of carbon. Most of us could easily halve that by avoiding processed foods and sodas. At the same time, we'd be cutting 7,500 calories a month, the equivalent of about two pounds of weight. "Every day we make dozens of food choices," says Geagan. "Make smarter ones and you can have an immediate impact on the planet and your health."