



Let's step out together

Need motivation to exercise? You'll find plenty of online support at Wonder Walkers says **Dame Susan Devoy**.

I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED LIFE is a series of highs and lows. The highs generally come from our hard work and endeavours and sometimes the lows just seem to happen and are often beyond our control.

It is the same when we are trying to make lifestyle changes. Attempts to walk regularly can be ambushed by a sick child or a crisis at the office. And some days you just can't be bothered and the comfort food and the couch have much more appeal than the effort needed to put on the walking shoes.

But you are not alone and the magical community we have at Wonder Walkers (www.wonderwalkers.co.nz) bears testament to that.

We all fall off the wagon from time to time but having others share their own personal challenges is often just the motivation we need to get right back on track.

Since the inception of Wonder Walkers I've made many new friends on the forum. I have never actually met them face to face, but certainly they have become a part of my life.

When the effort of trying to maintain a website, raise a family, stay fit and healthy and change the world gets too much I go online to be inspired by the wonderfully supportive comments the Wonder Walkers share with each other.

The forums are populated by real women who are happy to share their walking stories, and also the curve balls that life throws at them such as illness and family traumas.

The openness and honesty of my cyber buddies never ceases to amaze me. Even those who have never been online before find the courage to do so, made even easier by the fact that our website is designed for IT luddites like me. And unlike Generation Y, we still use the Queen's English so it is easy to read and understand.

At the end of the day I have simply come to understand that walking makes me happy, rather than focusing on the weight loss, the blood pressure and the plethora of health benefits. Here are some tips that might keep you motivated.

1. Exercise boosts energy. We all think we are too tired to exercise but I guarantee that sticking to a regular walking plan will increase your energy levels.

2. Exercise provides an outlet for anxiety and stress. Take it from someone who knows. I am not called the "psycho mother" for nothing, but I am always calmer and more rational on days when I have exercised. I have a high-strung nature and exercising takes the edge off, especially during PMT.

3. Exercise such as walking clears the mind. I've had all my best ideas when walking. I can solve the problems of the world and sometimes assign myself a particular problem to think over during a walk.

4. Sticking to an exercise regimen raises your self-esteem. Through the very fact that you are keeping to your plan.

5. Exercise offers a chance to be alone and uninterrupted. Or if you prefer, it offers a chance to get together with other women, which can be a relief if, like me, you spend your entire week in a testosterone-filled man cave. I have both kinds of exercise during my week.

6. Don't feel guilty if you take time for yourself. You are only at your best caring for others when you've done the best for yourself. Cars don't run on empty and neither do you.

7. Pure vanity can be a good motivator. While I like to focus on the inside rather than the aesthetic benefits, let's face it, people who exercise appear more energetic and more youthful.

8. When I don't feel like exercising, I remind myself how lucky I am to be able to move easily and without pain.

No wheelchair, no crutches, no brace, no trick knee or bad back. ■

