

# KATIE'S STORY

Image for illustration purposes only.



Katie is 32 and lives with her partner, two children aged one and ten and two dogs in a rural town in England. Her partner works full-time and her days are spent looking after the children, the dogs, and the house. Money is uncertain and tight, so she does all she can to budget. She also works part-time to make ends meet. With family bills and expensive child care costs, there is nothing extra for either Katie or her partner to spend on going out or exercising.

***“We’re just trying to get by, because we don’t want to get into debt, but it’s difficult. So we’re just trying to live within our means.”***

Katie is busy. She starts her day at 6am, goes to bed at 11pm, and breastfeeds at night. She works two or three shifts a week when her youngest child goes to nursery or is looked after by her mum, but otherwise she has sole responsibility for child care. Her second child always wants to be held so she has her hands full.

Katie’s partner has made it clear that he sees his role as being the breadwinner, whilst everything else is Katie’s responsibility, including working to bring in extra money. Katie feels the pressure to fulfil an increasing ‘women’s role’.

***“For me, my children come first and then I’ve got to make sure everything else is in order and then last, at the bottom of it, is me. What I look like is the last priority.”***

As a child, Katie enjoyed school sport, she competed at county level for netball,

cross-country and hockey. She continued to be active after leaving school by using home exercise equipment and DVDs, but this stopped in recent years after Katie moved house and no longer has the space. The move was three years ago, and apart from walking the dogs, she has not exercised since.

Katie has a hip injury which has limited the number of activities she can take part in. She has also lost confidence in her sporting abilities and has had a number of bad experiences which have put her off being active. For example, she went with her sister to a netball club but felt the women were too bossy and competitive.

***“When I was younger, I felt confident in what I was doing and I was good at it, but now I don’t feel like I would be any good at it. I’ve lost confidence a bit along the way. I am quite self-conscious, so I don’t like the thought of lots of people there seeing me get all sweaty and horrible... or my cellulite wobbling. I just want somewhere I can go where I can feel comfortable.”***

# KATIE WANTS TO START EXERCISING AGAIN...

She knows it would help build her strength in case she has another child, to stay healthy for later life and to help her to look good for her wedding next year. Mentally, she feels that she is not 'firing on all cylinders', and knows that exercise will help and give her more energy to do things with the kids.

In an ideal world, Katie would like to exercise more than three times a week, but she realises that going once a week is a good start. She has been actively looking for opportunities and tried two exercise classes to make this a reality.

The first attempt was with her friend, who is also a mum. They arranged to go to a local 'Clubbercise' class, but Katie had to cancel at the last minute as her partner had to work.

The second class, she and her friend came across by chance, it was a trampoline exercise class that would meet her low-impact physical

needs and be 'a giggle' to go to together but the 12 session commitment was too expensive to justify.

*"I don't think I'd have the spare money to justify spending it on that, rather than on the kids or food".*

## SINCE THEN...

Due to Katie's commitment to putting her children first while they are little, the cost of exercise classes and the difficulty in committing to a regular session, Katie has not been able to start exercising and feels very frustrated.

*"If we've got any money at the end of the month, it would be quite selfish of me to spend it on myself and not share it out. So, I think that's just what's been putting me off, the cost of everything and then finding the time to fit in with the family as well."*

## KEY LEARNINGS

- ▶ Mothers will often put their needs behind everyone else which makes prioritising physical activity difficult.
- ▶ Barriers to activity are multi-layered, with a mix of practical barriers like cost and emotional barriers like self-consciousness.
- ▶ Women change over time, life events such as having children and declining health can reduce confidence in even the most active of participants.
- ▶ Influences of friends and family can both enable and inhibit activity, the support of a friend's invitation can be a great facilitator but the lack of practical support can be a great barrier.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO GET WOMEN ACTIVE

Provide activities where:

- ▶ Costs and payment schedules are not prohibitive for those on low-incomes.
- ▶ Women can feel comfortable regardless of their competence and physical attributes, where emphasis is placed on togetherness and fun.
- ▶ You keep the conversation going, even if there is a missed class here and there, a nudge in the right direction might be just what they need.
- ▶ Mums and children can be active together, or provide free childcare for the duration of classes and activities.