



Walking to work: taking the first step

It took 3 years of good intentions and convenient excuses before I finally started walking to my office. Sometimes we seem to put our own barriers up, to stop ourselves trying something new.

The first time I did it, it seemed to take forever – unfamiliar routes always seem longer – but it soon became part of my routine. Then, when the clocks went back in October, I found myself about to walk home in the dark, and somehow that familiar cycle path didn't seem too appealing. Again, that first time was a bit uncomfortable, but pretty soon my comfort zone extended to include even the gloomiest of November evenings, until my biggest fear was what I might step in.

I recognise this pattern in my learners, too, particularly my adult learners. Attending a new language class can be daunting, and then - just when you are settling into the group - it all goes online and ... it's easier to opt out.

The question is, how do we coax those learners back? Does it help to share personal examples like these? Or have you found other ways of encouraging students to persevere and try again?

Once we take that first step, our self-imposed barriers can seem pretty flimsy. Now I'm checking my mental list of things I have put off, to see what else I might be brave enough to tackle this year.