

Guidelines for Goal Setting

Why set goals?

- It can be overwhelming at times to consider all the ways in which we can improve our diets and exercise patterns. Goals help us to prioritize and focus on what is most important at the time. They give us a plan of attack for behavior change. Without goals, it is easy to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, and out of control with the lifestyle change process.

How to prioritize change:

- Unfortunately, most of us can name many changes we'd like to make in our exercise and nutrition patterns. How can we choose which changes(s) we should make first? Consider the following questions when prioritizing changes.
 - Which changes(s) will address behaviors most associated with eating and exercise problems?
 - Which change(s) will have noticeable rewards?
 - Which change(s) am I most willing to make?
 - Which change(s) am I committed to?
 - Which change(s) do I feel comfortable making?
 - Which change(s) will fit into my existing lifestyle with minimal "upheaval"?
 - Which change(s) is the most realistic given my lifestyle (time, income, schedule, commitment, etc.)?

Setting realistic and achievable goals:

- In identifying behaviors most associated with eating and exercise problems, we often come up with problems that have been going on for years and problems that have many antecedents. How can we tackle a problem that is so ingrained and requires a change in so many aspects of our life? First, consider breaking down a large change into a series of smaller, more manageable steps. Second, consider if you are motivated and committed enough to changing this particular problem. It may take weeks, months, and even year of "baby steps" in order to fully address and correct this problem. Consider these additional thoughts when setting personal goals for change.
 - Start off with smaller, more reasonable goals that can produce closure to a problem. This will give you the confidence needed to tackle the multi-step, larger goals that may take months to complete.
 - Focus on positive, not negative, goals for change. For example, make goals to increase consumption of certain healthy foods rather than take away problem foods.
 - Find ways to make the change exciting and rewarding. For example, in writing a goal designed to increase your fruit consumption, consider adding a sub-goal of trying at least one new fruit per week. Or, in designing a goal to reduce your fat intake, consider adding a sub-goal of trying one reduced-fat item on the menu each time you eat out.



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Getting to Goal:

Making lifestyle changes that stick

Setting realistic and achievable goals continued:

- Do not expect or require perfection every day of the week! This inevitably sets you up for failure. Achieving a goal 4-5 days out of the week is more than adequate.
- Write out goals that are specific, measurable, and accountable. You should be able to answer the question, “Did I achieve this goal?” with a clear “yes” or “no” answer. For example:
 - Poorly written goal: I will increase my fruit consumption in the future.
 - Better goal: I will increase my fruit consumption to 2 servings per day, 5 out of 7 days of the week for the next 2 weeks.
- Consider adding flexibility to your goals during special or unusual times (holidays, travel, etc.). You may want to consider maintaining current behaviors/changes rather than attempting to add new goals during these times.

Rewarding goals achieved

- An important aspect of designing goals for behavior change is to add an incentive to achieve them! Consider the level of difficulty and the length of time you spent working on a goal when setting a reward. Appropriate rewards can be anything you value – be creative in your approach! We encourage you to reflect on what rewards might be particularly motivational to your progress. Some suggestions include:
 - day off work
 - small trip or vacation
 - health club membership
 - new workout clothes or equipment
 - workshop or retreat
 - massage, manicure, or facial
 - clothing

SMART Goals

S = Specific, systematic, synergistic, shifting

- I will substitute applesauce for butter on my toast for breakfast 3 times next week

M = Measurable, meaningful, memorable, motivating

- I will relax in the hot-tub at the gym for ten minutes after 2 of my workouts this week.

A = Achievable, Action plan, accountability, agreed-upon

- I will increase my exercise by walking three times a week for 15 minutes each the first week, and increasing by 5 minutes/session each week until I have reached 30 minutes/session by the 4th week.

R = Relevant, realistic, reasonable, results-oriented, rewarding

- I will increase my water intake from two glasses to four glasses a day and drink a glass of water mid-morning and mid-afternoon

T = Time based, tangible, and thoughtful

- I will do a strength training routine of 5 upper extremity exercises using 6 pounds dumb-bells and doing 12 repetitions with a 15 second rest between each exercise on Tuesday morning before work and Saturday morning at 9:00.

Getting to Goal: Making lifestyle changes that stick

Tools For Making Positive Lifestyle Changes

Set realistic goals

- Identify what it is you want to do and write down your goal. Then write down the specific steps to get there. Break big goals into smaller steps.

Don't procrastinate

- Change now. Take care of the things you have been putting off. Remember, habits can be changed!

Stay aware of your thoughts

- Decide which thoughts you will attend to, and which you will not attend to. This is the critical choice that affects moods, behaviors, and health. Strive to make your internal voice your cheerleader, instead of your own worst critic.

Get adequate rest

- Make sure you are getting restful sleep each night. It is difficult to find motivation when sleep deprived.

Give yourself permission to have fun

- Plan activities that bring joy and pleasure. Reward yourself for achieving your goals.

Keep a daily food record

- Research shows that people who track what they eat and drink are more successful at losing weight. Approach this as a tool to explore your eating patterns.

Get moving

- Find a movement routine that works for you. Record your exercise so that you can track your progress over time. Start small; be realistic about how much you can do.

Learn to say no

- Learn to politely decline requests that go against your goals, desires, motivation. Use assertive messages to express yourself while respecting the rights of others.

Prioritize your health

- Look at your daily activities and cut out or simplify wherever possible. Avoid activities that waste time and drain energy. Notice how much time you spend caring for others. Do you tend to put others' needs before your own?

Nurture your self-esteem

- Practice affirmations on a daily basis to work toward improved self-worth. Repeat the phrase, "I have the power to change myself. I deserve to be happy and healthy."

Practice relaxation

- Relaxation (deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, body scan) is a skill you can learn. The more you practice, the better you get. Practice when you are relaxed, and use it when you are stressed.

Practice mindfulness

- Keep your attention in the present moment without judging it as good or bad, happy or sad. Try to limit the amount of time you spend ruminating about the past and worrying about the future. Mindfulness encourages living each present moment as fully as possible.

Manage your stress

- Make a list of stress management strategies that will work for you.

Your list could include:

- Listening to music
- Taking a warm bath or shower
- Starting a new hobby
- Looking at photo albums
- Calling a friend
- Reading a book or magazine
- Playing with a pet
- Going outside and enjoying your surroundings
- Going for a walk
- Watching a good movie
- Asking for a hug

Getting to Goal:

Making lifestyle changes that stick

Losing weight and maintaining a new healthier weight is hard. Moving from a lifestyle that has led to obesity to one that promotes weight loss and better health can seem monumental. To make such significant changes in your life, you have to be ready. First, you need to ask yourself the following questions:

- Is now the right time for you?
- Are you ready to make a plan and stick to it?
- Do you have the support of your family and friends?
- Do you have the emotional resources to cope with all the change?
- Do you have the motivation to make lifelong behavioral changes?

If you are ready, start by making small changes one step at a time. Anything you can do today that was healthier than yesterday is a step in the right direction. Don't expect immediate results, and try not to get discouraged.

It is often helpful to think about a time that you were successful in making a change, and remember what motivated you. Try to draw on a similar motivation. Experiencing success, no matter how small, is important. And each time you meet one of your goals, set another one.

Notes and questions: