

Setting Personal Goals



Lofty long-term goals, such as “I want to lose 60 pounds in 6 months,” lead to frustration. Gradual goals that offer rewards one step at a time, such as “I will walk 20 minutes every day,” help you stay motivated to reach your long-term goals.

In goal setting, you may want to start with the big-picture end goal. Then, consider how you will reach that goal.

Long-term

Short-term goals are what you need to do over the next few weeks that will take you step by step to that long-term goal.

Short-term

Now that you have written them, see if they are “**smart**” goals.

- Specific
- Measurable
- Action-Oriented
- Realistic
- Time-Framed

Specific

“I will bring a fruit to work with me everyday” or “I will park five blocks from my office and walk” are specific actions that are relatively easy to commit to accomplishing. Make your goals include specific actions that will lead to a healthier lifestyle change.

Measurable

Do you know how many steps you have taken today? Can you count how many fruits and vegetables you have eaten this week? Choosing goals you can measure helps you see your progress and reveals areas that need improvement. Keep track of the amount of exercise and healthy foods you are getting each day.

Action-Oriented

What actions do you REALLY plan on taking to achieve your goals? Remember: “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” Think ahead, and consider what the obstacles have been for you and how you plan to avoid them. Once you get in the rhythm of practicing these everyday goals, you can begin expanding them to suit your increased energy levels, increased commitment, and your long-term goals.

Realistic

Don’t say, “I will work out 2 hours every day and never eat candy bars again” if that is not what you really want to do. Do not force yourself into a plan that is doomed for failure. Remember, we are talking lifestyle change. If the change is too dramatic and happens too quickly, it is not likely to stick.

Time-Framed

You can say to yourself, “I want to be 10 pounds lighter.” But one difference in your likelihood of success is in whether you are attempting to accomplish the goal in 2 days or 10 weeks. Pick a time frame that is realistic but also does not allow you to be lazy. Consider what rewards you will build into your time frame to keep you motivated. This will create a positive mental attitude that does not view your new healthy lifestyle as torture.

Now form some SMART goals, remembering all we’ve considered. Are they specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and time-framed?

Long-term

Short-term

Accountability

How will you be accountable for reaching these goals? If you build in a method for accountability in your goals, you will probably have greater success. Here are a few suggestions:

With a group

- Meet once a week and walk/work out/play sports together.
- Have inter-group competitions. (Add to a pot of money weekly for the person who walks the farthest that week.)
- On the job, walk around your building together after lunch.
- Have a “bring a healthy dish to work” day.
- If comfortable, chart progress (weight/inches/ steps walked) on a big chart in the office, gym, or community center.

With a partner

- Meet often or every day and walk/work out/play sports together.
- Taste-test healthy foods at different restaurants.
- Be on call for moments of weakness.
- If you made a healthy dinner, pack leftovers to share with your partner at lunch.
- Chart your successes and failures.
- Reward each other for meeting short- and long-term goals.

There are many ways we can support each other. Think of some fun and creative ways to keep physical activity enjoyable while encouraging accountability partners. Motivation might start to fade, so plan some activities and strategies that will keep you going in the long haul.

Lifestyle change is the true goal. It will not be long before you forget the days of being a professional couch potato! Name some fun ways you and your partner or group can support each other and stay accountable for the goals you have set.

