

Getting to Goal: Making Lifestyle Changes That Stick

Why set goals?

Improving your health starts with goals and a conversation with your health care team. Setting goals helps you focus on what is most important to you. Making a plan to reach those goals helps you take things step by step. Small successes give you confidence and leads to more success. Imagine how you will feel when you reach your goals!

How to Prioritize Goals

The first step is to prioritize your goals. Think about these questions when deciding what to do first.

- What change(s) am I most willing to make?
- What change(s) will have a clear reward?
- What change(s) can I fit into my lifestyle with the least disruption?
- What change(s) will be the most realistic given my situation?

Setting Specific and Realistic Goals

Reaching goals lets you know if you are making progress. It can be helpful to start off with a small, more reasonable goal. This will give you the confidence to tackle those larger goals in the future.

- Make a list of areas to work on.
- Pick one area that is workable.
- Think about what is changeable and not changeable.
- Break the goal into smaller, specific parts.
- Write a plan for how you will reach the goal over the next several weeks and months.

The 90% Confidence Rule

Do not expect to be perfect every day of the week. This will set you up for failure. Use the 90% confidence rule to decide whether your goal is realistic. Here is how it works: If you are not 90% sure that you can reach that smaller goal within two weeks, you have set the goal too high. Make it easier.

How to Set Smart Goals

Use the **SMART** goal setting system to help set precise goals. A well-defined goal allows you to track your progress and answer the question, “Did I achieve this goal?”

S = Specific

Example: “I will lift a can of soup 5 times with each arm, 2 times a day at least 3 days a week.”

M = Measurable

Example: “I will spend 30 minutes visiting with my sister in person or on the phone every Monday.”

A = Achievable

Example: “I will exercise by walking 5 minutes at least 3 days a week.”

R = Relevant

Example: “I will practice 10 minutes of meditation at least 3 days a week.”

T = Time-based

Example: “For the next week, I will prepare at least 1 meal for my family.”

My Personal Smart Goals

Use the SMART goal setting system to set your own goals. Start by making small changes one step at a time. Remember, anything you do today towards your goals is a step in the right direction.

1st Goal: _____

2nd Goal: _____

3rd Goal: _____

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7164.