

A New Year—A New You?

Is there a person on the planet who hasn't made a New Year's resolution—and then failed to follow through? Setting goals may be the easy part, but turning those goals into results....? Well, we all know how hard that can be.

Whether you're hoping to shed a few pounds, step up your level of exercise, or kick that smoking habit once and for all—you can take steps to improve your chances of success. Here are just a few ideas.

Set SMART goals. First of all, know how to set goals that will help you succeed. Here is an example of a SMART goal: "To help me lose weight, I will walk at least 10 blocks—instead of 7—at least 5 days a week for the next month. Here's what makes this a SMART goal:

Specific: The goal is precise. Your goal isn't just to walk more. With this goal, you will know exactly how many blocks you will walk each week.

Measurable: You can tell whether or not you have achieved the goal.

Achievable: Your goal should challenge you, but not be overwhelming. You're already walking 7 blocks, 4 days a week. So you know that it's likely you can walk 10 blocks, 5 days a week.

Relevant: This goal is appropriate because exercise is a key part of a weight-loss or weight-management plan.

Time-bound: Your goal is limited in time. At the end of a month, you can continue with this goal or commit to a new one.^{1,2}

Start small, think big. Starting with small steps can help you succeed. But as you set goals, keep an eye on the big picture: How does this goal fit in with the rest of your life? With the SMART goal above, for example, it may help to remember that exercise is good for your overall health, whether or not you lose weight. It may give you more energy, decrease stiffness, and help you keep up with your kids—or grandkids.^{2,3,4}

Stay motivated. Understanding the big picture is one way to stay motivated for the long haul. What else keeps you motivated?

- Try the buddy system. Have someone who's supportive join you. It really works.
- Visualize success. Picture yourself walking through the neighborhood. You can also use positive self-talk to stay on track. "I feel so much better after I get out for a walk."
- Reward yourself. Once you've met your goal, reward yourself with something material, like a movie or CD—but not food. Or, you can try something less tangible like a quiet afternoon sitting by a lake.
- If you slip up, start over. This doesn't make you a bad person. Congratulate yourself for your past successes, and begin again.^{5,6}

How we can help. What if one of your goals has to do with managing your medications? Maybe you are having trouble remembering when or how to take them. Start with us. We can guide you. For example, we'll show you techniques for taking your medications the right way. Or we'll help you find products to jog your memory so you don't forget to take your meds.

Now, *that's* a great buddy system!



Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.

Sources

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