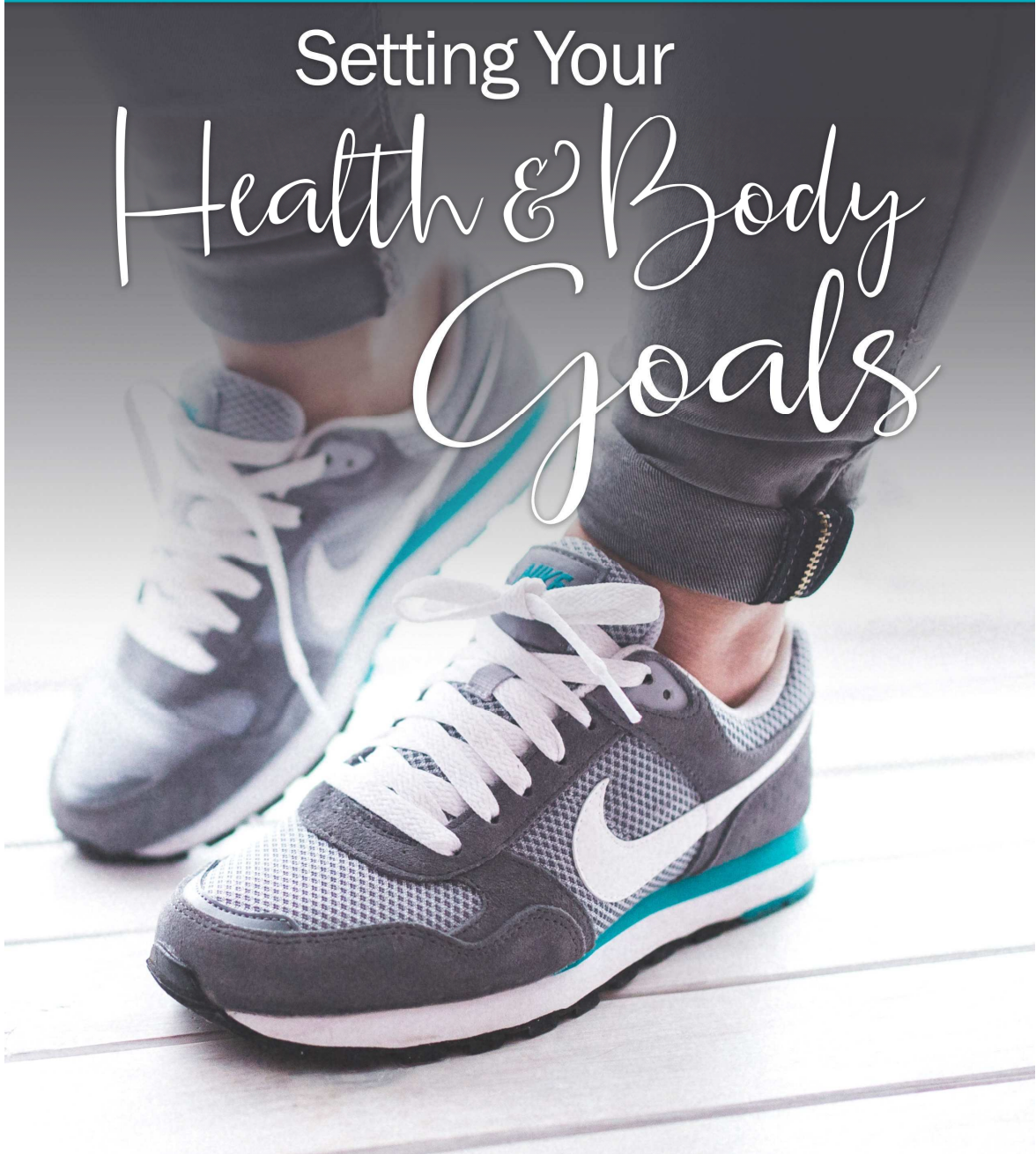


FAST TRACK GUIDE:

Setting Your

*Health & Body
Goals*



Fast Track Guide: Setting Your Health and Body Goals

If you want to achieve overall health, it is very important to have specific goals and a plan of action, which enable you to make progress and achieve your goals. Goal setting is the act of identifying what you want to achieve. This is the first step in making changes. After you know what you want to achieve, the next step involves planning, which includes the specific details and the actions you'll take to meet each goal.

You may recognize Benjamin Franklin's quote, "If you fail to plan, you're planning to fail." This is very often true. In general, you only tend to make a plan when you believe you can achieve a goal and are determined to succeed. However, if you don't believe in yourself and your ability to make meaningful changes, you are essentially planning to fail, even before you try.

With the right mindset and motivation, the goal setting process helps you identify what is happening now and enables you to visualize what can happen in the future, if specific actions are taken. Goals encourage you to take action and be accountable. When set up properly, your goals can motivate you and reward your progress. If you want an aspect of your health to change, plan to succeed.

There is more to setting health and body goals than simply writing them down. Effective goals need to be realistic and achievable. Each goal should be broken down into the small, sequential steps you need to take to achieve the goal.

Setting Your Goals

Writing down your goals is crucial to achieving them. When you write your goals down, they become "real" to you, rather than just "some day" dreams. Writing your goals down also helps you remember them and you can re-read them if/when you need to refresh your memory. Consider using an outline format so you can create main sections and subsections. Keeping your goals organized helps you succeed because you can see the big picture and the details, as needed.

Create your goals using the elements of SMARTER goals. This method of writing goals ensures that your goals include certain elements that help you reach your target and achieve your goals. In order to create SMARTER goals, each goal should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-based, Evaluation-focused, and include a Recognition/Reward.

As you begin to consider and select the goals that you want to achieve, keep these tips and suggestions in mind.

- **Identify Your Overall Goal** – Identify the broader, yet specific, main goal you have for your health and body. You will break this down into sub-sections and eventually steps, within your plan. Weight loss, more body tone, measurements lost or being overall healthy; write it down. This should be what you desire the most from yourself. This is what you will use to make smaller more attainable goals.

- **Health Focused Goals** – Be honest with yourself and make sure your goals are healthy. If you are a certain body size and shape, setting a goal to be one hundred pounds one day may be extremely unhealthy. If you are not one hundred percent sure make an appointment with your doctor or do some research of your own.
- **Assess Your Health** – Weigh yourself, take your measurements, document your test results, and/or your vitals. Track this info by writing it down in a notebook or using a fitness tracker, such as fitday.com.
- **Be Realistic** – No one can safely lose twenty pounds in a week, nor is it healthy to try. Setting unrealistic or unattainable goals can harm your health and discourage you. Educate yourself about what you can realistically expect. While you can find information online about realistic health goals, it's important to get your info from authority sites known for their reputation for accuracy. However, your doctor is the best source for this information since he/she knows your history and current health status.
- **Break Down Broad Goals** – Broader goals usually need to be divided into several smaller goals. Doing this allows you to focus on the immediate goal. Working on too many goals at a time can be overwhelming and confusing. If you want to achieve “healthy hydration levels,” smaller goals might include “Hydrate with water first” or “Eat fresh fruit at snack time.” These more specific goals allow you to focus on the healthy habit.

Once you've written down your initial goals, using the SMARTER goals method, and sub-divided your larger goals into smaller, individual goals, it's time to start creating your action plan.

Creating Your Action Plan

Now you know what you want to achieve (your destination), the next step is to create a plan of action (your roadmap). Your plan of action should include a detailed list of steps and actions you'll take to reach each goal.

Look at your first goal. Make a list of things that will help you achieve the goal. Let's say it's the first day of the month and your goal is to lose five pounds by the last day of the month. What healthy exercises and eating habits could help you lose the weight? Before you answer this, identify any unhealthy behaviors that have contributed to your weight gain. Replace them with healthy habits and activities that will help you lose the weight.

Depending on what your unhealthy habits are, you may want to incorporate one or more of these healthy habits to help control your weight. Of course, in your SMART action plan you will need to be more specific about what, when, where, how, and why you will take these actions.

- Track your calories each day (in-take and burned).
- Exercise a minimum of 30 minutes each day. (Include types of exercise in the plan.)
- Snack on fresh fruits and vegetables instead of vending machine type snacks.
- Drink only water between 8am and 5pm each day.

Here are a few other tips and ideas that will help you create your healthy action plan.

Organize Effectively – Organization is a key factor in your overall success. From creating your goals to scheduling daily snacks, the better organized you are, the more likely you are to reach and maintain your health goals. As Sanford I. Weill said, “Details create the big picture.” When you organize all the details, instructions and activities, you create a foundation for “big picture” success, which includes your maintenance stage.

No Excuses – Everyone has time to incorporate healthy behaviors and activities into their lives. When you replace unhealthy aspects of your life with healthy aspects, you aren’t adding anything to your schedule. You just change your priorities and focus. Don’t allow yourself to justify poor choices or make excuses.

Adjust as Needed – Social activities should not interfere with your health goals. If you know something is coming up, make a short-term adjustment that enables you to stick to your plan. For instance, if you want to enjoy popcorn at the movie, reduce your calorie or fat intake during the day to allow for the popcorn. Another option might be to eat a meal right before the movie. If you feel full, you won’t be tempted to snack during the movie.

Use Technology – There are many health-related apps available. You can find apps for everything from setting your goals to keeping track of your blood pressure. There are even apps and tools to remind you to go for a run, eat a snack, track your water intake, etc. Technology can make meeting and tracking your goals easier. If you have a busy schedule, alarm apps can also help you with accountability.

You may want to find support groups, where people have similar health needs and goals to your own. They can be a great resource for help as you set your goals and create your action plan.

Mindset And Focus

When setting your health and body goals, it is important to have the right mindset. Your mindset should be positive, as well as focused on long-term health strategies and success. Here are a few concepts you may need to adopt into your thought process and/or your lifestyle.

Lifestyle Changes

Creating a plan of action for your health and body goals involves lifestyle changes. Meeting your goal isn’t enough, unless you can maintain the change for the rest of your life. The only way to achieve this is to replace unhealthy behaviors and beliefs with healthy versions. You will be happier and more successful when you embrace healthy lifestyle changes, rather than short-term “fixes.” There are no shortcuts when it comes to your health and your quality of life.

Health & Body Knowledge

Knowledge is your most valuable tool. Continue to learn about topics that relate to your health, situation, and goals. Staying up to date on the latest scientific studies and

advancements can give you a preview of new methods and medications in development. It also helps you make informed choices about your health, goals, and your plan.

The key to expanding your knowledge is getting your information from well-known and respected sources. There are many great health-related websites online. However, there are also websites that look “official” but they contain inaccurate info. Stick with nationally recognized sites and organizations at first. Then, broaden your scope by visiting the sites and organizations they recommend. This will help to ensure that you don’t get scammed or receive potentially harmful information.

Love And Respect

In the beginning, you may feel a little guilty about making your needs a top priority. In addition, your family members may sabotage your efforts, especially if you haven’t included them in the lifestyle-change process. Don’t let this discourage you and above all, don’t quit!

A desire to be healthier is not selfish. It is often a product of your love and respect for your family and friends. You want to make changes so you can do more and “be there” for them for a long time. You want to change because of your love and respect for them. That’s great, but...

In order for your lifestyle changes to be successful, you must love and respect yourself. Even if your family resists change, you need to love and respect yourself enough to continue doing what’s right for your health, and ultimately your family/friends. When you take care of yourself, you are being a good role model for everyone around you. As you make changes to meet your goals, it encourages others to take better care of themselves as well.

Positive Thoughts and Actions

Negativity can creep into your thoughts and actions, if you’re not careful. Make it a point to look for the positive side of everything. You will find what you look for, so don’t waste time on the negative. It steals your joy and is discouraging. You can find something positive about everything, if you look closely enough.

Say that your goal was to run one mile but you only made it half way. While you didn’t achieve your goal, you did run the half-mile. Celebrate the progress you made and continue aiming for your goal. Depending on your health level, the reason you didn’t meet your goal may be an extremely important discovery. Sometimes when you don’t meet your goal, it’s not because you “failed.” You don’t actually fail until you stop trying to change for the better.

However, sometimes you may not meet a goal because you expected too much of yourself or you miscalculated the length of time it would take to make that much progress. In this case, you may need to break the goal down into smaller increments. Focusing on the positives, such as a making a helpful discovery, is a great way to stay motivated and reach your goals.

If you focus on “perceived” failures, you are less likely to meet your goals. The moment you realize this is happening, immediately use positive self-talk to remind yourself that

this is a process and it takes time. Put things back into perspective by thinking about where you started and how far you've come. If this is difficult for you, you may want to start writing in a journal to emphasize the positives, on a daily basis.

Accountability and Motivation

Accountability and motivation are the determinant factors in meeting your goals. Personal accountability is an ongoing commitment to yourself to make healthy, responsible choices, and take ownership of your actions. Motivation, in most cases, is an internal factor, which prompts you to make certain decisions and take specific actions. Essentially, it's the driving force behind what you choose to do, or don't do, as the case may be.

In order to be successful, you need to develop and master the skills related to accountability and responsibility, as well as self-motivation and self-control. Practice does not "make perfect." However, practice does make "persistent." Persistence is a huge factor in attaining success.

Self-Accountability Strategies

You are in control. You make choices. You decide what actions to take. You also decide when to take those actions. You are responsible for your progress and your success. In business, your boss usually holds you accountable for your portion of a project. In life, you have to hold yourself accountable. This can be difficult when what you *want* to do and what you *should* do are two totally different things. During these times, you need to "adult" and do what's right. Your wellbeing and success depend on it.

Your ability to hold yourself accountable for "keeping your word" or commitment to yourself (and others) is, absolutely, critical to meeting your health and body goals, as well as every goal you have. Nobody can control what you think, say, or do. You are the only person who can control you. The bottom line is that unless you are accountable, you will never really change your bad habits.

If accountability or self-control is difficult for you, you can develop and strengthen those skills. Here are a few strategies you may want to incorporate in your goals and your plan. Remember, your plan is, basically, your prioritized to-do list and your first step to being accountable.

Goal Priority – Make meeting your goal the top priority. Schedule your daily, weekly, and monthly goal activities on a printable calendar, as well as on all of your devices. Keeping the day and time consistent also helps to keep you accountable. Unless there is an actual emergency (involving blood), do not alter the activity time or your commitment to it. You are automatically busy during those times.

Journal Daily – Select a very specific time each day to write in your "health accountability" journal. Just as you have a "wake-up" time, schedule a time to write in your journal. Include details about your day. The more details you can add, the easier it will be for you to see unhealthy patterns and make changes to your plan to address these.

Daily Education – Read about something that relates to your health goal every day. It could be the latest developments, an inspiring book, posts in a health related group, etc.

Share the info on social media. Be prepared to answer questions and reply to comments.

Set Alarms – The busier you are, the more important it is to set reminders. You’ve already got your activities scheduled on all of your calendars. You know where you’re supposed to be at specific times. However, last minute phone calls and such may throw you off track. Set an alarm on your watch, phone, or device. Don’t set multiple alarms for the same thing. Train yourself to take action when you hear the alarm.

Use Creative Visual Cues – Place your exercise equipment, gym bag, and/or your workout clothes in an unconventional place like in front of the door. You may have done something similar with trash bags on trash day.

You know yourself better than anyone else does. Identify your problem areas regarding accountability, commitment, and self-control. Put together a set of strategies and actions that will continue to help you develop the accountability skills you need to succeed.

Partner/Group Support

There may be times when you need a little help from others. If you find that something from your past is blocking your efforts, work on removing that block. Get help from a close friend, family member, or professional, who understands the issue and can give you extra support.

For many people, goals are easier to accomplish if it feels like a team effort, whether it’s a team of 2 or 200. If you are one of these people, surrounding yourself with supportive people is very important. Consider find an accountability or goal partner. Choose someone you trust and you can talk to, honestly. Someone that has similar goals is preferable. When each of you can talk about your goals, it helps you both make progress. A good partner can help motivate you and “call you” on something, if he or she thinks you are getting off track. Plus, you are encouraged by doing the same for your partner.

Sharing your experiences makes your goals more real. When you tell someone that you are going to do something, they expect you to stick to your word and do it. You are more likely to “allow” yourself to backslide. And let’s face it, if you don’t stick to your word or keep your commitment, people will bug you about it until you do. However, for the group or partner, this gets old. After all, it’s not their responsibility. That’s why you have to take the initiative, accept responsibility for yourself, and follow through.

Surround yourself with people that understand your struggles, inspire you, and help you stay focused. There are great groups online and in your local area or region. Look for local groups that have meet ups. If suitable groups don’t exist, start a local group. The more you can physically surround yourself with like-minded people, the easier it will be to implement your new lifestyle, a little at time, and accomplish your goals.

Tell your friends and family not just your accountability partners. They need to know you are making important changes to your lifestyle. If you keep your goals a secret, the people who are closest to you, and most likely to help you, won’t be able to support your efforts. Even if they don’t fully understand, they will support you because they care. Educate your family, friends, and even your co-workers about why you are trying to

make lifestyle changes. They may even see your progress and decide they want to join you and become healthier.

Self-Motivation Strategies

Figuring out what motivates you can be difficult, especially since your motivation can change over time. What you do to motivate yourself depends on your personality, as well as your interests, sense of humor, and other things unique to you. Incorporate your interests and your sense of humor into your activities as much as possible. The more fun you have, the more rewarding your experiences will be, even before you celebrate meeting your goal. Here are a few motivation strategies you may want to use.

Add Humor - Wear a shirt that has a quirky saying that you find particularly funny and/or has a hidden meaning for you. Watching people read the saying can be hysterical. Make a mental note of how many people do a “double-take.”

Use Mementos - As you exercise, wear or carry a small item, which belonged to a loved one. This can be especially motivating, if the loved one would have been very proud of you and your progress. This can also work well if the item belongs to a child, grandchild, or another person that inspires you to meet your goals. Don't have a memento? Carry a picture with you.

Write Creative Messages – This one might seem a little odd at first but it is fun and can be very helpful. If you are a Sci-Fi fan, it will probably be right up your alley. Every day, leave yourself a note in a specific place. The note should be positive and encouraging. Here's the twist....

It should be written from the perspective of the “future,” successful you. In other words, write the message as if you're sending it back in time to give the “present” you inside information or support. Doing this can help you envision better days and health ahead. It can also help you keep stumbling blocks from interfering with your progress and success.

The best thing you can do to keep yourself accountable and motivated is to be honest with yourself and everyone around you. Make it a point to keep family and friends in the loop and even get them involved in the process and the activity, whenever possible. Sharing your activities with others makes the time pass quickly and can build wonderful, lifelong bonds.

Proactive Glitch Planning

Changing lifelong habits and beliefs is never easy. Lifestyle changes can be exciting and emotion-filled experiences. However, it's well documented that major life changes can be very stressful. This stress is usually associated with things like getting married, moving, having a child, losing a loved one, or changing jobs. All of these things involve lifestyle changes.

It's human nature to gravitate towards what you know, rather than follow an unfamiliar or uncomfortable path. At some point, you will experience a setback or stumbling block. However, if you know that this will happen, you can be proactive. What you want to do is

put strategies into place that minimize possible negative effects. For this, you will need to do some brainstorming and planning.

Identify the areas where you or others are likely to throw a monkey-wrench into the works. For example, if someone isn't supportive of you walking in the park, be prepared for possible manipulation attempts or disagreements that are intended to keep you from walking. Plan how you will respond to objections.

If you tend to have trouble sticking to your exercise schedule, because you just don't "feel" like doing it today. Make a compromise with yourself for today. Commit to doing half of your routine. The chances are high that if you make it half way through, you can push forward to do the other half. Don't make a habit of compromising. If it's a daily issue for more than a week, consider altering your routine by cutting it down a little. Instead of trying to walk a mile, walk 2/3 of a mile.

Another thing to consider is the kids. If they are used to you being there with/for them, you may get some resistance from them when you start doing things to meet your own needs and goals. Plan how you can show them that they are still important to you. Consider taking them with you occasionally. But most importantly, explain why you are changing the way you do things, why it's important to you, and how they can help you by being part of your support "team."

When you feel stressed or frustrated, take a few minutes to focus on healthy stress-relief activities. Breathe deeply, listen to music, listen to a motivational audio series, read or look at something funny, drink black tea, hug someone, draw or sketch, write in your journal, walk or run it off, or spend time with your pet. If stress is a daily issue, consider adding a stress-free time to your daily schedule.

Progress and Achievements

Reaching your goals should be rewarding. You should be proud of your progress and achievements, even if they seem small to you. For every goal you achieve, celebrate your success by doing something special and healthy. This is great motivation to continue following your new healthy lifestyle. Setting up rewards can make change fun and exciting. Celebrating your progress can also help relieve any stress, uncertainty, or guilt you might feel.

Make sure the rewards you set for yourself are healthy. Food rewards can be a slippery slope. Avoid rewarding yourself with food. Instead, consider taking a cooking class or hiring a personal chef to cook something healthy for you. Kitchen gadgets might also be a helpful reward.

Your rewards should reflect the size or level of your goals. If your main goal is to lose one hundred pounds, make the reward a very nice one so it continues to motivate you until you achieve the goal. Depending on your finances, you might want to consider rewarding yourself with nice tangible reward such as a full or partial kitchen remodel. Rewards should always be healthy and excite you when you think about them. The best rewards are ones that keep you active and help you achieve other goals along the way.

Share and celebrate your goal successes with friends, family, partners, and group members. No goal is too small to acknowledge so don't be afraid to share it. However,

it's important for you to keep things in perspective. Achieving your health goal should always be more important to you than the "reward" you give yourself. Having and maintaining your health will give you

Getting Started

The quickest way to success is building a solid foundation before you begin. This starts with setting realistic, achievable goals and making a plan to reach them.

To get started, take a few minutes to a few days to consider what you really want to as far as your health. Remember, this is not a short-term 'diet', it's a healthy way of living.

Once you've identified your goals, prioritize them by importance. Break big goals, or those that take a long time to reach, into smaller goals that can be easily managed. Make your goals and expectations realistic and achievable to avoid progress delays.

Once you've set your goals, it's time to create a plan of action. When creating this plan, be aware of your limitations, possible hurdles, and your environment. Address how you will meet and overcome anything that may possibly stand in your way of success. Make this plan as easy to incorporate into your existing lifestyle as possible to ensure the least number of bumps in the road ahead.

Work every day do something to improve your life, your perception of your life and what is happening around you. Find positivity in negativity and learn to love yourself now as you are. Keep educating yourself about health and find accountability partners and inspiration everywhere you are to help keep you motivated. The more education you obtain and the more supportive people you surround yourself with, the more motivated you will be to succeed.

Avoid being overwhelmed by making your action plan as detailed as possible. Make time to find peace with yourself and let go of stress. Lastly, take pride in your accomplishments, big and small. You did all the work to achieve that goal, no matter its size. You created a plan of action and it worked, so reward your self. Make it fun and exciting but don't overdo it. All these tools will allow you to accomplish your health and body goals easily and in a fun way.