

“What are the barriers and motivators to setting and keeping realistic goals?”

Use these examples to keep moving forward.



Barriers

There are many perceived barriers to setting and keeping goals. Let's go through some of these barriers and learn how to overcome them.

Setting unrealistic goals

Unrealistic goals can be frustrating and cause you to give up. Here are some examples of unrealistic goals and how you can modify them to be realistic.

Goals too general and overwhelming	Realistic goals	Comments
<i>"I'm going to lose 50 pounds."</i>	<i>"I'm going to lose one to two pounds a week for six months."</i>	Start small. Don't be discouraged if you only lose one pound or even if you don't lose any weight in a week's time. Keep at it and the weight will come off.
<i>"I'm going to run a marathon."</i>	<i>"I'm going to start running two miles a day, three days a week."</i>	Work your way up to your ultimate goal. Becoming a good runner takes time. Be patient and enjoy yourself.
<i>"I'm going to start eating healthier foods."</i>	<i>"I'm going to eat fruit two times a day."</i>	The realistic goal is more defined and easier to keep. Before you know it, eating healthy will become second nature to you.

Not having an action plan

If you don't have a plan for your goals, you won't reach them. It's easy to form a plan. In fact, when you have a plan, you'll feel like you've already started to accomplish your goal! Below are some examples of plans for the goals above. Choose the plans that work best for you. *Always consult your doctor before beginning a new exercise or nutrition program.*

Goal	Plan examples
<i>"I'm going to lose one to two pounds a week for six months."</i>	Join the gym. Work with a trainer. Start exercising at home using a video. Learn how to count calories, and limit yourself to a certain number of calories per day. Keep track of what you eat and which exercises you do on a daily basis.
<i>"I'm going to start running two miles a day, three days a week."</i>	Map out a couple of routes. Decide what time of day you're going to run. Have an alternate indoor route in case the weather is bad. Get a friend to run with you. Buy running clothes, making sure they're appropriate for the weather. Buy a good pair of running shoes.
<i>"I'm going to eat fruit two times a day."</i>	Instead of a doughnut for breakfast, have yogurt with fruit. Substitute fruit for a sugary dessert at lunch. Learn how to make delicious fruit salads. Have an apple in the middle of the afternoon instead of a piece of candy.

Not having any support

Get support for your new goals from your family, friends and coworkers. Support makes reaching your goals much easier. Your supporters can help you, encourage you and even join you! Ask your family members to give you time to exercise. Ask them to be adventurous with you and try cooking different recipes. Take turns choosing dinner. Ask a coworker to walk with you during the lunch hour, or a friend to take a yoga class with you after work.

No time

Time is a huge factor when you want to start an exercise program. We are all so busy with work, families and taking care of our homes. But you'd be surprised at the things we do that are time wasters.

- Are you watching television when you come home from work? Why not use that time to exercise? You can substitute exercise for watching TV, or you could exercise on a spin bike, treadmill, or use weights *while* watching TV.
- Can you set the alarm a half hour earlier and exercise in the morning before work?
- How about joining an exercise class two nights a week? Many people are more inclined to stick to a new goal if they're involved with a group doing the same thing.

There are many ways to find time to do something that's very important to you.

Motivators

When you first set your goal, your motivation is pretty high. But sometimes, after a while, your motivation can wane or even disappear. How can you keep yourself inspired to keep up the good work? Here are a few tips:

- Look at how much you've accomplished so far. If you've walked every day for two weeks, take pride in that. If you've lost three pounds, it's a great start! If it's going slower than you want, don't be discouraged. Old habits are hard to change, but you're on your way.
- Ask a friend or family member to help you stick to your goal. Use your support network to help you stay motivated. Talk to them. They'll give you new perspectives you haven't thought about.
- Celebrate along the way. Give yourself a treat every week, or even every day, to reward yourself for sticking to your routine.
- Track your progress. Keep a chart of how often you run, or what you've eaten or how much weight you've lost. When you start to lose your motivation, take a look at the chart to see what you've accomplished.
- Add variety to your activities. Change your running route or your exercise routine. Buy a new low-fat cookbook and try new recipes. Switch out your regimen for something different. Go dancing, play racquetball, join a Zumba class or start a garden. Exercise can be fun!
- Last but not least, don't be discouraged if you slip. Everyone slips. The trick is to get back into it. Keep working at it. Think again about why you want to reach your goal.

It takes small changes to create a healthy lifestyle!

