



Goal setting and readiness to change



Health



Wellness



Nutrition



Support

Introduction

Having an understanding and awareness of what you want to achieve is extremely important for success. Without a clear goal, we have no target or accountability to ourselves.

Success looks different for everybody. Although losing three per cent to five per cent of your initial body weight over 12 weeks can be a realistic target. Many of the noticeable changes come from improved health conditions, a change in shape or size and improved mental well-being and happiness, even though the number on the scales hardly changes at all.

Use the tools in this resource to set your own goals and check how ready you are to make that change.

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Making a plan

To be successful, you'll need to put some thought into what you want to achieve, why it's important to you, and how you're going to achieve it.

You can do this by:

- understanding why change is important
- setting a goal
- making sure you are ready to make a change

The rest of this booklet will guide you through each step.

Understanding why change is important

We're more likely to have success achieving our goals when we're motivated by something important to us. This motivation could derive from very personal reasons such as your own health, or external factors such as having other people to care for who rely on you being fit and healthy. Whatever it may be, a goal's importance needs to come from your own mind.

Sometimes we know a change is important, such as being more physically active, or eating healthier. But we might not know exactly why.

Being active and eating healthily can mean many different things to different people, so think about what that means to you and why it's important for you. You can also speak to other people to understand why making a change may be good for you.

No one can tell you what your reason for change should be. It is personal to you. Before setting a goal, think about the changes you want to make and why they are important for you. Use the scale below to help:

On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how important is it to you to make a change?

0-1: It is not important to me

2-3: It is not that important to me

4-5: It is somewhat important to me

6-7: It is important to me

8-10: It is extremely important - nothing else matters more right now

If you score a goal's importance as 5 or lower, think about what else is important in your life right now. It may be that some other things need attention before you can eat healthier or become more active. This could include your finances, mental wellbeing, or work-life balance. Having the best environment around you to make healthy changes is important if you are to be successful.

If you score a goal's importance as 5 or above, the change is clearly important to you and you should move onto setting goals.

Setting goals

It's important to set yourself realistic goals. Goals that enable you to be successful and feel in control are the ones that will work the best.

Different approaches will be successful for different people, so try to find a target that works for you. Try not to measure yourself against others and focus on self improvement. Remember...

There is no 'quick fix': Making changes takes time and commitment to become a habit. Try not to just think about the end goal such as weight loss and instead think of the things that you can do that will help you achieve that overall goal every week or month.

Make diet and lifestyle changes you can sustain: You will want to be able to keep going with the changes even after you have reached your goal. To be successful and maintain your change, it will need to be something you can eventually keep doing without having to think too hard about it. People who are successful stay realistic and develop techniques to make their new lifestyle and activity habits an enjoyable part of their lives.

Ask for the right support: It makes all the difference. This could be a friend, partner, family, health professional, community group, social media group or website. This not only keeps you inspired but helps you through hard times. Decide who can help you and tell them the best way they can do it. For example, ask a friend to go to an exercise class with you.

It's important not to 'diet': Diets can be extreme, strict, and miss out essential nutrients your body needs. Diets tell you what you should and should not eat, which means we are not likely to stick to them for long.

Top tips for goal setting

Make it specific: Usually this means setting a numerical target, such as 'eat three pieces of fruit and veg' or 'walk five kilometres a day'.

Make it easy to measure: By adding a number there is usually a simple way to measure, through a food or activity diary.

Make it easy and achievable: This can be done by making sure that the target is specific to your body, and that you have given yourself enough time to achieve it.

Keep a record of your answers so you can review your goals regularly. Set as many goals as you need to, as often as you like, to help change your habits. Focus on short-term goals that you can achieve every week, as well as goals for a month and over a year.

What is a good goal for weight loss?

You may have heard that reducing your calorie intake by 500 per day will help you lose two to three pounds of body weight in a week. However, while there is factual evidence behind calorie counting, this is not the most important factor when trying to improve your health and reduce your weight.

When setting goals for weight loss, consider the types of foods you are eating, the size of your portions, mealtime routines and levels of physical activity. These are the habits that will be more successful for lasting change.

Are you ready to change?

Even with the most realistic goals and the best intentions, if you are not yet ready to make a change then this could lead to a lack of progress. Sometimes the reasons are due to our own motivation, while sometimes it's more about external factors such as work, childcare and weather.

When starting to make new habits and changes to our diet and activity levels, people often talk about how motivated they are. Motivation is a little bit like saying how ready you are to make a change. If your motivation or readiness is low, the chances that you will stick to your new routine will be lower.

Now that you know your changes are important and you have set your goals, use the scale below and think about the goals you have set.

On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how ready are you to make a change to achieve your goal?

If you score 0-1: I am not ready to change

There is no reason to be disappointed with a low score. This tells you that there may be something else that needs to happen in your life first and that this goal is not the most important thing right now. This could be childcare arrangements, or an improved work-life balance. Make a list of things that are stopping you and set goals to help this situation instead.

If you score 2-3: I am not sure about making a change

You may want to change but not be sure what the next steps are or why the change is important to you. Go back to thinking about why you want to make a change and the ways those changes will benefit you. Speak to friends or family, or search on trusted websites.

If you score 4-5: I am ready to make a change

You are in a position where you are ready to change but you may be missing the final few pieces of the puzzle. Check your goals again and see if they are going to work for you. Are there any other goals you could set for your lifestyle that will help make you more successful?

If you score 6-7: I have started to make changes

You are likely already starting to change some of your habits in order to achieve the goals you have set. Continuing to develop a deeper understanding of why you want to change will help keep you on track.

If you score 8-10: I am starting to make new changes a habit

Change is now something you are becoming used to. Focus on what will make you successful permanently and adjust your goals if you need to so success continues.

If you scored 5 or above on both the importance and the readiness questions, you are likely to have set some good, positive goals to work towards. On the other hand, if you've scored lower on one or both scales, look back at your goals and see if you can make any changes to set yourself up to being more ready to change.

Expect setbacks

No one is capable of setting goals that all work first time, even if everything you have done is correct. Life can throw challenges at us that prevent success and mean we need to review what is important right now.

Do not feel like you have failed. Instead, go back to the start, think about the reasons why this attempt did not work, and set a new target. For more support read our 'Overcoming setbacks' and 'Maintaining change' booklets.

Final thought

The road to success is not a straight line; there will be good days and bad days. Focus on making changes that fit your lifestyle. Even if there are setbacks along the way, they are a part of success so long as you do not give up.

If you would like to learn more or require more information and support, please get in touch!

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