



# Overcoming setbacks



**Health**



**Wellness**



**Nutrition**



**Support**

# Introduction

An important aspect of maintaining change is to keep going with the healthier changes you have made to your lifestyle. This is not always easy to do and there will be many occasions when you find it challenging or even impossible.

There are many things that can make it more difficult for us to maintain healthy changes, including:

- holidays
- lack of time
- cost of food and unexpected bills
- nights out
- family celebrations (e.g. a meal out or a birthday)
- national holidays (e.g. Christmas, New Year)
- cold weather and shorter daylight hours

Recognising the challenges and barriers you will have now will make them more manageable when you get to them.

By recognising them, you also take accountability for them and can accept them as part of your ongoing lifestyle changes. They certainly don't need to be ignored.

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## Recognising challenges and barriers

It's important to recognise the challenges and barriers you're likely to come across on your change journey. There will also be challenges throughout your journey that you did not expect.

Write down any barriers or challenges you are going to have when it comes to maintaining your routine and habits, and working towards your goals. You can repeat this task at any time to support yourself in maintaining change.

As an example, barriers you might know about include:

- When I get busy at work, I choose packaged food because it is quick and easy
- When making family meals, I often snack on food I am making

But also think about things that *could* get in the way in future, for example:

- Work may ask me to cover shifts with illness
- There are a lot of family celebrations and events coming up

## Overcoming challenges and barriers

Success is not a straight line. Everyone can expect to have times when things don't work out as we hoped, but a lack of success does not mean failure. Rather, we need to learn from what happened and adapt our approach to being successful.

Below are some ideas to help you think about ways you may be able to overcome these challenges...

### Plan ahead

Every now and then you may notice some of your old habits coming back into your daily routine. If this is more than just the occasional challenge, think about why you want to keep your healthy changes under control and how important this is to you.

Planning is a strategy that can be applied for these challenging situations. Try to plan around what you might choose to eat or drink, and look for healthier choices on menus online in advance. This type of planning is important to help you keep up your behaviour changes and get through these challenging situations.

### Review your goals

Setting short-term goals is important as they are the building blocks to achieving your main goal. When setting yourself goals, you should try to:

- decide when you will review your goals
- consider the areas for change that you want to work towards

- examine your daily lifestyle and choose areas where you feel you could make a small change over the next few weeks
- ask yourself what you can do more of, what you can do less of, and what would help you make these changes
- add one or two new goals – what else would you like to achieve?

If you do not meet your goals every day, that's ok. It's important to keep returning to what you have recorded.

## What have you achieved so far?

Whether it's weight loss or increased levels of energy, you may or may not have noticed some health benefits to your changes. Other positive changes you may have noticed could be:

- a slimmer waist measurement
- a smaller collar size
- an improved sleep pattern
- feeling better about yourself and being less stressed
- the ability to walk further and do more activity without being breathless
- starting to follow a new routine easily

It's important that you consider a wide range of achievements, both large and small. Simply sticking to a new routine is a huge success in itself. Reflect on the progress you have made. This will adapt your mindset to focus on what you are achieving and help keep focus on your goals.

A temporary return to old habits does not mean failure. Paying attention to dietary choices and exercise can help maintain weight loss. Identifying situations, such as negative moods and fallings out with other people, and using alternative methods of coping with such situations rather than eating, can prevent returning to old habits.

## Learn from the past

Think about what you have done previously that made a healthier lifestyle easier to follow. What can you do now that has worked in the past?

Ask yourself questions such as:

- What activity have I enjoyed most in the past?
- What healthy recipes and foods do I enjoy?
- How have I managed stress in the past?

Use your answers to these questions to help motivate yourself to keep going.

## Move on from setbacks quickly

Once you have acknowledged that there has been a setback, it's important to be realistic. Thinking about these setbacks and focusing on the negatives will not help you progress.

Remember that setbacks happen. Aim to change again quickly so that any setbacks do not hold you back for long.

## Focus on the bigger picture

Diet and activity are usually the primary focus of weight loss plans, but they are two pieces of the puzzle. Better sleep, managing stress levels, and good mental health are just as important to your wellbeing. They help you overcome challenges easier and cope with difficulties in a more positive way.

If you only have a weight loss goal, this can sometimes be a negative goal to focus on. Try to set goals that aim for improved health, more energy, increased fitness, or a smaller clothes size.

## Reset the target date

Expecting quick results can make lifestyle change difficult to maintain. Instead, focus on the process of living a healthier life, and the results will come in time.

Think about your progress in terms of months, not days. When progress seems slow, or you have a bad day, try to remember how far you have come. Write down your achievements along the way, and the things that made you feel good.

Reading these back on your bad days will remind you of the journey you are on and help you to move past any setbacks.

## Be kind to yourself

No one expects you to be perfect and achieve all your goals straight away. It's times when things are more challenging that you need to treat yourself as you would a friend.

Talk to yourself positively and remind yourself of what you have done and what you are good at. Remember why weight loss and better health is important to you and be clear about what not acting would mean.

Now you know your challenges and have explored some ideas to help manage them, set yourself an action plan to help limit setbacks from occurring. Involve your support network to help you overcome them and achieve your goals.

An example of an action plan could be: *'I am going to make sure I spend five to ten minutes every evening making lunch for work the next day. By making it at home, this will be healthier than buying something pre-packaged.'*

## Final thought

Setbacks will occur. That's a fact. By planning ahead for these scenarios, you will help yourself to overcome them. When setbacks occur, don't dwell on what has or hasn't happened. Instead, reset and go again.

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

**Telephone:** 01942 496496

**Email:** [wellbeing@bewellwigan.org](mailto:wellbeing@bewellwigan.org)

**Website:** [bewellwigan.org](http://bewellwigan.org)

