

# HUMAN PERFORMANCE CENTRE

## Want to Make Successful Nutrition Changes? We Can Help!

Every January, many of us start out with ambitious New Year's resolutions determined to eat healthier, exercise more or lose weight. We start out very motivated and have the best intentions to stick to these changes forever. However by February, many of us have already fallen off the wagon. Why is it so hard to make change and why is it even harder to stick to change?

It all comes down to goal setting. Many of us set very large goals without specific ideas how to get there. Their goals are very broad and not very realistic so it becomes very difficult to measure success. Without success our motivation is not going to keep up.

Here are some tips on how to successfully make and maintain changes. When setting goals to make change, they should be SMART. SMART stands for, SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ACHIEVABLE, REALISTIC and TIMELY. Having a goal follow the SMART

guidelines will help you focus on specific behaviours you want to change, and further will make your goal more realistic and achievable. Follow these guidelines to set yourself up for success:

- 1) Be SPECIFIC. 'I want to exercise more' is not a very specific goal. What will you do and how will you do it? An example goal that is more specific would be: 'I will go for a 30 minute walk every Monday, Wednesday and Friday during my lunch hour at work.' Many people find it helpful setting reminders in their phone to remind them about their upcoming activity. It helps to recruit a friend or coworker to walk with you and hold you accountable.
- 2) Your goal should be MEASURABLE. 'I want to eat more fruit and vegetables' is a very broad

goal. How will track your progress? Examples of a measurable goals are: 'I will eat one piece of fruit with breakfast and lunch every day' or 'I will eat two servings of vegetables every day for supper'. You could keep track of these goals by journaling your food intake or using a list on your fridge where you can check off the number of servings of fruit or vegetables you consume in a day. Tracking progress helps you stay accountable to your goals, plus you can visualize your small successes

- 3) Set ACHIEVABLE goals. 'I want to lose 50lb' is a very common goal someone might set out for themselves, but ask yourself, is this achievable or realistic? And how will I get there? Setting weight loss goals is often not ideal. People lose weight at

different rates and your motivation declines quickly when weight loss goals are not achieved. A smarter approach to weight loss would be to focus on the behaviours that will lead to better health and weight loss, such as reducing food portions, increasing vegetable and fruit intake and increasing activity levels. An example of an achievable goal would be: 'I will use a smaller plate at every lunch and supper meal to control the portions of food that I eat.'

- 4) Be REALISTIC. 'I will stop drinking pop, eat more vegetables and fruit, reduce my portions and start exercising 3 times per week' is not a realistic goal. Too many goals are difficult to achieve. Set yourself small goals that you know you can achieve, ideally one behaviour at

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change at a time. Approaching too many behaviour changes at once is very overwhelming and you are more likely to fail. Meeting realistic goals is a great confidence booster keeping you motivated to set another goal. Examples of realistic goals are: 'I will stop drinking pop, but will treat myself to one can of pop every Saturday night', 'I will bring a homemade lunch to work on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays' or 'I will eat breakfast at home 3 days per week'.

- 5) Be **TIMELY**. The point of a SMART goal is to set short term goals that are specific and achievable. Without a time frame to a goal, you more likely to get off track or lose focus. Aim for goals that can be achieved within one week to one month.

The good news is that small behaviour changes quickly become habits. Once a new behaviour becomes a habit and it is part of your every day life it will require less attention and effort. Then you can move on to the next small behaviour change...one SMART goal at a time.

Along the way, be prepared for obstacles. When setting SMART goals, envision obstacles you might encounter. Remain positive especially when things aren't going as planned. It helps to track your successes and your failures along the way. Keep a journal. If you don't reach your goal, stay positive. Review your goal and change it so you are able to achieve it. Keep reminding yourself why it is important to you to make changes to your diet and lifestyle.



Celebrate successes and take time for yourself by going on a special outing, go shopping, try a new activity or a plan a mini vacation.

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