

## Meet Your Goals for The Year

For many people, January is when we set New Year's resolutions or goals. Resolutions can be a great opportunity to make positive changes in your life, big or small. That being said, a lot of us have made resolutions but not kept them. So what's the difference between those who are successful at keeping a resolution and those who aren't? Motivation and setting realistic goals!

Here are some simple steps to help you to get and stay motivated all year long to achieve your goals.

### 1. Define your goal

When you set a goal, make sure that it is realistic for you. You want to set yourself up for success. The first thing you can do is ask yourself:

- What do you really want?
- Why do you want this?

Write the answer to these questions down. By writing down your answers you will know what you hope to achieve, where you can start and be able to make a plan. Identifying what you want to do and why you want to do it can be a strong motivator for success.

An example of a goal might be:

- I want to eat better so that I can feel healthier and have more energy.

### 2. Identify the specific steps needed to reach your goal

Making positive changes in your life is a great idea. Where we often stumble is figuring out where to start.

A great first step is to take a broad goal and break it into smaller specific steps that are less overwhelming and easier to achieve. Achieving these smaller steps will help you feel more successful and motivated to continue.

Taking the example from above, you know you would like to eat better to feel healthier and have more energy. Perhaps you only eat 2 meals per day, you don't eat breakfast and you don't eat enough vegetables. Some examples of small specific steps that you could set for yourself may be:

- I will eat 3 meals each day, at least 5 days per week.
- I will aim for half a plate of vegetables at each afternoon and evening meal.

### **3. Work on 1 step at a time**

Being successful is motivating. To better your chances of success, work on 1 step at a time. Once that step feels manageable, add the next step, then the third, and so on. Some steps will feel easy quickly and others will take more time and practice. It can take as long as 3 weeks for a new behaviour to become a part of your regular routine. If you find yourself struggling, review your steps. You may need to break down your steps even more.

For example:

- In January you can start with "I will eat 3 meals per day, at least 5 days per week." Once you have done this and find that it is working, you can move on.
- In February you can add "I will aim for half a plate of vegetables at each afternoon and evening meal." When you feel that you can confidently maintain this you can add further steps such as:
  - I will eat breakfast every day, or
  - I will schedule in 30 minutes for lunch in my work calendar so that I don't work without taking a break.

### **4. Make an action plan for each step**

Change requires planning and commitment. After you decide on the step you want to take, develop a plan for success. Consider what you need to make each step happen.

Using the example of "I will eat breakfast every day", you could do 1 or more of the following:

- Think about what you want to eat for breakfast and plan to have those foods easily available.
- Get breakfast ready the night before. If you are making a smoothie, get the blender out. If you are having cereal, put the cereal box on the table with a bowl and spoon.
- Go shopping to make sure you have nutritious ready-to-grab foods ready.
- If you are taking breakfast to go, pack it the night before so it doesn't take extra time in the morning.

### **5. Check in**

As you go along, check in with yourself regularly to see if you are meeting the small steps you have set. If you miss a day, or a step, think about what may have happened. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Did you carry out your plan of action? For example, were you able to go shopping so that you could have nutritious ready-to-grab foods ready? If not, think about what you could do to help make it easier on yourself the next day.
- Was the step you planned to take too big? For example, you may have decided to make your own bran muffins for breakfast in the morning. This can be a big task. How can you make the steps towards this goal more manageable? You could try making the muffins on the weekend for your weekday breakfasts.
- Are other things unrelated to your plan stealing your attention? Consider how you might work around this or if now is still the right time to be working on this goal.

Be kind to yourself. Missing one day does not mean you have failed. Brush it off and start again tomorrow. With any change, things happen that we don't plan for. This is part of the change process. Finding ways around these and keeping going is the most important part.

## **6. Reward yourself**

Celebrate each step you achieve! Celebrate before you move onto the next step or goal. Do something you love that has nothing to do with achieving the goal.

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