



HOW TO EFFECTIVELY Set, Achieve and Maintain Health Goals

Note: If your goal is to quit smoking please use “Your Guide to Quitting for Good” available at both Concordia University Health Services locations, on the Health Services website (in the Health Notes newsletter section) or you can request a copy by sending an e-mail to: morano@alcor.concordia.ca



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Your health is your greatest resource. If you don't believe this, imagine going through the day with a health problem (e.g. a broken leg, diarrhea, a high level of stress) and then imagine repeating the exact same day without the health problem. Which of these two experiences would you prefer? Undoubtedly, the day without the health problem. Many people desire to improve their health and reap the benefits of healthy living. Unfortunately, making lasting changes can be challenging. We have developed this workbook—based on what research shows is effective in behaviour change—to help you successfully set and achieve your health goals.

Is this workbook for you?

Setting and achieving health goals require changing the things that you currently do. Research tells us that health behaviour change takes place in stages.

The first of the stages, called precontemplation, happens when a person is not thinking about making changes. Examples include a person who uses tobacco and is not interested in quitting or a sedentary person who is not thinking about becoming physically active. **If you are in this stage then this workbook is NOT for you.** However, you may want to ask yourself what would it take for you to change. Weight gain? A heart attack? Consistent low energy? Chronic pain? A diagnosis of diabetes? At one point in their life, most of those who engage in unhealthy behaviours think about changing what they do, often because they don't feel well. Changing sooner—rather than later—means that you can spend more time reaping the benefits of healthy living. Get informed. Learn about the fantastic benefits associated with adopting positive health behaviours.

In the second stage, called contemplation, a person thinks about changing but is not yet taking steps to make changes. There is some thinking, but no action yet. **If you are in this stage then this workbook is NOT for you.** You can move along the stages towards readiness to change by learning more about the benefits of healthy living and by giving serious thought to how much better your life can be when you protect and enhance your health.

The third stage, called preparation, is one where a person is actually preparing to make a change. They plan to change soon and are taking steps to make that change. Examples include gathering information or making an appointment to meet with a health professional. **If you are in this stage, then this workbook is DEFINITELY for you.** The exercises in this book will guide you through the change process and give you the tools you need to effectively set and achieve your health goals.

In the fourth stage, called action, a person is doing what is recommended to improve as well as maintain good health, such as exercising for 150 minutes each week at a moderate to vigorous level. In the fifth stage, called maintenance, a person maintains the changes they have made in the action stage. **If you are in either of these stages then this workbook is for you.**

How to use this workbook

Research has identified factors that are associated with effective behaviour change. What science tells us is that success in behaviour change can be greatly enhanced by approaching it systematically (i.e. with a plan). This lends support to the adage “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail”.

Effective behaviour change can be summarized in 4 steps:

- Step 1:** Set a S.M.A.R.T. goal
- Step 2:** Build commitment to the goal
- Step 3:** Make a plan
- Step 4:** Monitor

The Determinants of Health

As a society, we put great emphasis on individual choices and behaviours as factors that affect health. Yet there is a growing understanding that health is determined not only by individual factors such as behaviours, biology and genes; it is also impacted by a range of environmental, economic, and social determinants.

THE CHOICES WE MAKE ARE SHAPED BY THE CHOICES WE HAVE. Making healthy choices isn't only about discipline and motivation. The context of a person's life influences their choices and plays an enormous role in determining how healthy they are. Where we live, whether we are exposed to pollution, our income, our education level, and our ability to influence our circumstances all have a considerable impact on our health. For example, some communities have easy access to fresh, affordable fruit and vegetables; other neighborhoods only have fast food restaurants and depanneurs. Some people have enough money, nice homes, and safe places to walk and bike; others don't. We can see that the decisions of political leaders, institutional administrators, and company managers—all decision-makers—powerfully impact the health of individuals and the community.

We **CAN** influence the determinants of health. For example, we can advocate for policies that reduce the gap between rich and poor or we can lobby for increased availability of healthy foods in our communities. However, these changes will not happen overnight. It is critically important to adopt a lifestyle that will help you achieve your optimal health potential. It is these **PERSONAL HEALTH PRACTICES** that are the focus of this workbook.

For more information on the social, political, and economic root causes of health and how to address them, check out the February 2008 issue of the Health Services newsletter Health Notes (<http://www-health.concordia.ca/healthinfo/notes.php>), as well as “Health, in other words...” by Santé et des Services sociaux Québec (<http://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/acrobat/f/documentation/2007/07-245-02wa.pdf>).

The intention of this workbook is to guide you through these steps. It contains exercises that incorporate the science of effective behaviour change. If you **TRULY** want to make changes in your health behaviours, complete all exercises (indicated with a pencil) and be as detailed as possible. Including more detail may seem time consuming; however, the time and energy you invest in working on the details will greatly enhance your chance of success. If you require more space for any of the exercises, add another sheet.

This workbook is not something you can complete in a weekend and put away. It is an active document, just as behaviour change is an active process. Keep reviewing the exercises and add more information so that you can gain greater depth and insight—and add richness to the experience.

With these points in mind, move to Step 1 and start your journey towards better health and a better life experience!

STEP 1: SET A S.M.A.R.T. GOAL

The first step in moving towards better health is to identify what you wish to achieve. In other words, you have to set a goal for the behaviours you want to adopt.

Research has identified that effective goals share 5 characteristics that can be remembered using the acronym S.M.A.R.T. A goal should be:

Specific: This means that the goal is precisely defined, such as “I will be physically active at a moderate intensity for 150 minutes a week”. Do not set vague goals such as “I want to eat better” or “I want to exercise more”.

Measurable: You have to be able to measure your progress toward the goal in order to be able to identify whether or not you've achieved it. A clue that a goal is measurable is that it has a number in it.

Action-oriented: The goal needs to relate to things that you do, rather than the outcome of those behaviours. For example, if you wish to lose weight—which is a final outcome—you need to set nutrition and physical activity goals—which are the behaviours that lead to weight loss.

Realistic: You must be able to achieve the goal, taking into consideration such factors as time, energy, the impact on your health etc. Exercising 3 hours a day, every day, is not realistic. Eating less than 1,200 calories a day can have a negative impact on a person's health, so this health goal is not appropriate.

Time-bound: The goal must include a time frame—daily, weekly etc.—as to when you will engage in the behaviours you have identified.

Besides these characteristics, there are other considerations about goals that you should keep in mind. They include:

- **The goal should be your own**
 - not because someone else wants you to do it
 - not because you think it is the right thing to do
 - not because everyone else is doing it
- **The goal shouldn't be too easy.** Easy goals don't present a challenge and require very little investment of time and energy to achieve. A goal should be something challenging that requires effort.
- **Be careful not to confuse a strategy for achieving a goal with the goal itself.** For example, “Go to the gym 4 days a week” is one of the strategies to achieve the goal of being “physically active for 150 minutes a week”. It is not the goal. You can tell the difference between a goal and a strategy by the

EXAMPLES OF A S.M.A.R.T. GOAL

NUTRITION

Every day I will eat according to the Canada Food Guide and will have:

- 9 servings of fruit and vegetables
- 6 servings of grains
- 2 servings of milk/alternatives
- 2 servings of meat/alternatives
- 3 servings of oil/fat
- other foods totalling 150 calories or less

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Each week I will engage in a total of 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity above and beyond my activities of daily living.

SLEEP

I will go to bed at 11:00 or earlier every night and wake up at 7:00 or earlier every morning.

level of specificity. A goal has many paths to get there, while a strategy is one of those paths.

- **The goal should not contradict other goals.** Fortunately, health goals are usually consistent with other goals.
- **The goal should be worded in a positive manner whenever possible.** State what you will do rather than what you won't do. For example, "Each day I will eat 9 servings of fruit and vegetables, 6 servings of grains..." is worded positively; whereas "I won't eat chocolate" refers to what you won't do.

A final note on setting goals

Sometimes the goal you want to achieve and maintain requires a significant amount of change, so it can seem daunting and overwhelming. In such a case, it is best to set intermediate goals that progressively get you closer to the final goal. For example, if your final goal is to be physically active for 150 minutes week but you currently aren't physically active, an intermediate goal could be to engage in physical activity for 60 minutes a week. Once you are consistently achieving your intermediate goal you can set another intermediate goal that is more challenging (e.g. 100 minutes a week) and so forth, until you progress to working on your final goal.

Now it's time to complete Exercise 1.1. and write down your health goal before moving on to the other exercises in the workbook.

EXERCISE 1.1

MY HEALTH GOAL



MY **ULTIMATE** HEALTH GOAL

In the space below write your ultimate health goal and review it to ensure that it is a S.M.A.R.T. goal by placing a ✓ in the corresponding boxes:

MY GOAL IS: Specific Measurable Action-oriented Realistic Time-bound

Note: If you identify that your ultimate health goal is very challenging and it seems overwhelming, consider setting progressively more challenging intermediate health goals (below) that will build towards your ultimate health goal.

My **INTERMEDIATE** Health Goal

In the space below write your intermediate health goal and review it to ensure that it is a S.M.A.R.T. goal by placing a ✓ in the corresponding boxes. Set an intermediate goal **ONLY** if you believe that your ultimate goal is overwhelming and you want to start with an easier goal and progressively work up to your ultimate goal.

MY INTERMEDIATE GOAL IS: Specific Measurable Action-oriented Realistic Time-bound

STEP 2: BUILD COMMITMENT TO THE GOAL

Of the four steps in the change process, this step is the most crucial. What separates those who successfully achieve and maintain health goals from those who don't is commitment. Commitment is different than motivation or willpower. Both motivation and willpower can increase or decrease. For example, if it is raining outside you may be much less *motivated* to go for your evening run and may skip it altogether; or someone may have brought you your favourite chocolates for your birthday and they look so good that your *willpower* decreases and you end up having a few—or all of them. Motivation and willpower may work in your favour when times are good; but when times are bad they won't help you stick to your goal. On the other hand, commitment doesn't waver. You are either committed or you are not. There is no in between. Commitment helps you stick to your goals during the good times and the bad times—when barriers get in the way.

To make this clear in your mind, think about some things that you are totally committed to. Perhaps it is your studies, your kids, your hobby or your favourite television program. Nothing can get in the way of your commitment to this goal. If it is raining you will still go to class or pick up your kids at school. If you are very busy, you will still plan a way to do your hobby (maybe find time on the weekend) or watch your favourite program (maybe you will tape it and watch it later). You see how commitment works? When there is commitment and you come up against a barrier you find a way around it, over it or under it. You overcome it!

Commitment to the goal is crucial for success at achieving it. So how does a person go about building commitment to a health goal? Two factors contribute to commitment: importance and ability. For a person to commit to a goal they need to see it as important and they need to believe that they are able to carry out the behaviours/tasks that are necessary to achieve it.

The exercises that follow are geared to help you:

- a) identify how important you see your goal, and
- b) identify how capable you believe you are at achieving it

A) How important is this goal?

Several factors contribute to determining how important a goal is. They include tying the goal to your values, tying the goal to other life goals, and examining the pros and cons of change. The exercises that follow are designed to help you identify and/or build the importance of your health goal.

• Tie the health goal to your values

A value is something that is important to you; something that has worth. You will evaluate a health goal that is consistent with the values you hold as more important than one that doesn't fit with your values. Healthy living doesn't have to be in competition with your other values. In fact, it is consistent with many of the values that people hold. For example, setting a goal to engage in regular physical activity fits well with the value of adventure since regular physical activity increases fitness, and fitter people are better prepared to be adventurous. Setting a goal to get 8 hours of quality sleep each night fits well with the value of energy, since a regular sleep schedule is associated with more energy. Setting a goal to eat according to the Canada Food Guide is consistent with valuing the environment since a healthy diet is a plant-based diet, which is better for the environment. Complete Exercise 2.1 now to identify how your goal fits with your values.

The bottom line is that you need to see the change as a **GIFT** you give yourself...not a deprivation.



Review the list of values below and identify those that are important to you by placing a ✓ in the box next to them. Don't be limited to the values we have listed. Add your own that haven't been mentioned in the spaces at the end of the list. Next, transfer your most significant values to the left column of the table below. Finally, identify how working towards, and achieving, your health goal from Exercise 1.1 fits with these values.

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accomplishment, success | <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> Frugality | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive attitude, optimism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> Dependability | <input type="checkbox"/> Growth, improvement, development | <input type="checkbox"/> Power |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amusement, entertainment, recreation, fun | <input type="checkbox"/> Devotion | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard work | <input type="checkbox"/> Prestige, affluence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balance | <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline | <input type="checkbox"/> Health, fitness | <input type="checkbox"/> Prosperity, wealth, money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beauty, attractiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Education, learning, knowledge, discovery | <input type="checkbox"/> Happiness, contentment, joy, delight | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation, rest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bravery, courage | <input type="checkbox"/> Efficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> Harmony | <input type="checkbox"/> Safety, security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career | <input type="checkbox"/> Energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calmness, serenity, tranquility, peace | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Independence, self-reliance | <input type="checkbox"/> Strength |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellence | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity | <input type="checkbox"/> Wisdom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charity, giving, generosity | <input type="checkbox"/> Expertise | <input type="checkbox"/> Logic, reason, critical thinking | Other values: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration, teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairness, equality | <input type="checkbox"/> Love, romance, intimacy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment | <input type="checkbox"/> Faith, spirituality | <input type="checkbox"/> Maturity | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Fame | <input type="checkbox"/> Organization | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Peace | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Competence | <input type="checkbox"/> Fashion | <input type="checkbox"/> Passion | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Control | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial security | <input type="checkbox"/> Pleasure | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation | <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom, liberty | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Friendship | | |

| I value: | How achieving my health goal fits with this value: |
|----------|--|
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- **Tie the health goal to your other goals**

We all have goals in life. These include such things as being financially secure, working in a rewarding job, meeting a partner, having children, living a long and healthy life, travelling to Europe, starting a business etc. If you identify that achieving your health goal will help you achieve other life goals, then you are more likely to see your health goal as important and commit to it. Complete Exercise 2.2 now to identify how achieving your health goal will help you achieve your other life goals.

EXERCISE 2.2 HOW MY HEALTH GOAL CAN HELP ME ACHIEVE OTHER GOALS 

Below, list some life goals you wish to achieve. Then, identify how achieving the health goal you identified in Exercise 1.1 can help you achieve this life goal.

| A goal I have in life is to: | How achieving my health goal helps me achieve this life goal: |
|------------------------------|---|
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- **Examine the pros and cons of changing**

Another way to evaluate the importance of a goal is to develop a “balance sheet” of the pros and cons of making the necessary changes in your lifestyle to achieve that goal. A person is more likely to evaluate a goal as important if the benefits (i.e. the “pros”) they see from these changes outweigh the consequences (i.e. the “cons”). For example, the pros of engaging in 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week include: more energy; more stamina; greater muscle tone; greater flexibility; better balance; better mood; better sleep; better sex and a reduced risk of many illness including diabetes, heart disease, stroke, depression and some cancers. On the other side of the balance sheet, some of the “not-so-good” things (i.e. cons) to becoming more physically active may include: less time for rest and relaxation; getting up one hour earlier and, therefore, going to bed earlier; experiencing soreness; and costs associated with a gym membership, shoes, workout clothes or a new bike. Complete Exercise 2.3 now to identify the pros and cons of working towards your goal.

**PROS:**

Below, in the left column, list the potential pros (good things) about changing to achieve the health goal you have indicated in Exercise 1.1. Think about the pros both now and in the future. Next, in the right column, indicate how likely you **BELIEVE** that this good thing will actually happen as a result of the changes you make.

| The good things about changing | Likelihood that this will happen (circle answer: 1= not at all likely, 5=somewhat likely, 10=extremely likely) |
|--------------------------------|---|
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

CONS:

Below, in the left column, list the potential cons (not-so-good things) about changing to achieve the health goal you have indicated in Exercise 1.1. Think about the cons both now and in the future. Next, in the right column, indicate how likely you **BELIEVE** that this not-so-good thing will actually happen if you make the changes to your lifestyle.

| The not-so-good things about changing | Likelihood that this will happen (circle answer: 1= not at all likely, 5=somewhat likely, 10=extremely likely) |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

Putting it together: How important is my goal?

The goal of the previous three exercises is to help you identify how important your health goal is. Remember, in order for you to commit to that goal, you need to see it as very important. Take a few minutes to review your answers to Exercises 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. and then complete the following exercise:

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 representing “not important” and 10 representing “extremely important”) rate how important it is for you to achieve the health goal you have identified in Exercise 1.1. Circle your answer and be **HONEST**.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| not important | | | | somewhat important | | | | | extremely important |

If you rated the importance of your goal as low, you likely will not wholeheartedly commit to your goal. After all, why would you invest time and energy into something you don't see as important? Before you move ahead in this workbook you will benefit by giving more thought to the importance of your goal. Below, we have listed some things you can think about that can make this goal more important on your list of priorities. Think about these and then rate the importance of your goal again.

- **Review each of the exercises.** Did you capture *all* the values that are important to you? Did you identify all the ways your values and this goal fit together? Did you list all your life goals, and think of all the ways achieving your goal can help you achieve them? Can you think of more pros and cons of changing?
- **Do some research to identify more pros.** Get on the Internet, consult a health care professional or talk with someone who has already achieved the goal you have set to find out more good things about it. The more pros you have on your list, the more likely you will see your goal as important.
- **Identify your needs.** Many behaviours are attempts to meet basic needs. For example, a person may realize that they use unhealthy snack food to wind down at the end of the day. Happily, there are *many* strategies that can meet our needs more effectively, with fewer adverse effects and more benefits!
- **Think critically about your belief in the likelihood that the pros and cons will happen.** When you circled a number indicating the likelihood that one of the pros or cons would happen in Exercise 2.3 you were rating your belief that this will happen (not the actual likelihood). If you evaluated many of the pros with a low likelihood and rated many of the cons with a high likelihood, you probably won't see the goal as important. Was your rating of the likelihood accurate? If you have worked towards this goal in the past, think about all the good things that happened. Think about how you felt. Think about how you looked. Even think about how relationships with others changed for the better. Also, take a look at the cons. Are you overestimating the likelihood that not-so-good things will happen? Do you have evidence that these things will happen? What about others who have changed? Have they experienced these negative effects? Are the not-so-good things really all that bad? (For example, if a con is that you will have less time to watch television, can you see this as a good thing?)

B) How confident am I in my ability to do what it takes to achieve this goal?

Seeing a goal as important is not the only factor that helps a person commit to change. After all, a person may see a goal as important yet not make efforts to achieve it. For example, many people see quitting smoking as important but they continue to smoke. Although a firm belief in the importance of achieving a health goal is necessary, it is not enough to ensure success. A person must also believe that they are able to make the change. In fact, research in the area of behaviour change has identified that self-efficacy—the belief a person has in their ability to do what it takes to achieve a goal—is a powerful predictor of success in behaviour change.

Several factors contribute to a person's belief in their ability to make a change. They include examining and applying strengths and skills, identifying other priorities that could interfere with reaching the goal, and identifying possible barriers to the goal and ways to overcome them. The exercises that follow will help you explore your belief in your ability to do what it takes to achieve the goal you have set in Exercise 1.1.

• **Identify and use your strengths and skills**

We all have strengths and skills. These are the positive qualities, assets or attributes that help us achieve our goals. By identifying the strengths and skills you have and how you can use them to achieve your goal, you increase your belief in your ability to achieve the goal, which in turn increases the chances that you will be successful. Complete Exercise 2.4 now to identify your strengths and skills.

EXERCISE 2.4

MY STRENGTHS AND SKILLS



The objective of this activity is to identify the strengths and skills you have and how you can use them to achieve your health goal. There are several ways to identify your strengths and skills:

- One way to identify your strengths and skills is to look back at goals you have successfully achieved in the past and think about the strengths and skills you tapped into to achieve them. Take a minute to write down 3 goals you have achieved in the past. Examples include: graduating from high school, quitting smoking, establishing and maintaining a romantic relationship, competing in an event, traveling abroad etc.

| |
|-------------------------------|
| 1. Past goal I have achieved: |
| 2. Past goal I have achieved: |
| 3. Past goal I have achieved: |

- Another way to identify your strengths and skills is to think about what you like about yourself, what people compliment you on and what people rely on you for, as well as think about any rewards or recognitions you have received and competitions you have won or did well in.
- A final way to identify your strengths and skills is to review the list of strengths and skills below and to check off any that you possess. At the end you can include other strengths/skills that are not listed.

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptable | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative | <input type="checkbox"/> Generous | <input type="checkbox"/> Optimistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Rational | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong-minded |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventurous | <input type="checkbox"/> Critical thinker | <input type="checkbox"/> Hard-working | <input type="checkbox"/> Organized | <input type="checkbox"/> Realistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Task-oriented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ambitious | <input type="checkbox"/> Curious | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Passionate | <input type="checkbox"/> Reflective | <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical | <input type="checkbox"/> Daring | <input type="checkbox"/> Idealistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Patient | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable | <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assertive | <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated | <input type="checkbox"/> Imaginative | <input type="checkbox"/> People person | <input type="checkbox"/> Resilient | <input type="checkbox"/> Versatile |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Capable | <input type="checkbox"/> Deliberate | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent | <input type="checkbox"/> Perseverance | <input type="checkbox"/> Resourceful | <input type="checkbox"/> Wise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communicator | <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent | <input type="checkbox"/> Planner | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible | Other strengths/skills _____ _____ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compassionate | <input type="checkbox"/> Determined | <input type="checkbox"/> Inventive | <input type="checkbox"/> Practical | <input type="checkbox"/> Results-oriented | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confident | <input type="checkbox"/> Eager | <input type="checkbox"/> Logical | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solver | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-aware | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conscientious | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Mature | <input type="checkbox"/> Progressive | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-controlled | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative | <input type="checkbox"/> Farsighted | <input type="checkbox"/> Methodical | <input type="checkbox"/> Project-oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-directed | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courageous | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiator | <input type="checkbox"/> Purposeful | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual | |

Below, list the strengths and skills that you have identified above and how you can use them to achieve the health goal you wrote in Exercise 1.1.

| A strength or skill I have is: | How I can use this strength/skill to achieve my health goal: |
|--------------------------------|--|
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- **Identify competing priorities**

Commitment to a goal requires dedicating time, energy and other resources to achieving it. This means making the goal one of your priorities. However, each of us has many priorities in life including work, school, relationships, leisure, hobbies, volunteering, entertainment etc. The higher up on the priority list your health goal is, the more resources you will dedicate to it. If your other priorities consume all your time and energy, there will be no resources left to dedicate to your health goal. In Exercise 2.5, write down the things that take up your time, energy, money and other resources. Some examples of priorities include sleep, family, school, work, a hobby, entertainment, time with your partner, leisure and socializing.

EXERCISE 2.5

MY PRIORITIES



Below, identify which of your current priorities take up a significant amount of your time, energy and other resources. If you have difficulty identifying priorities, think about a time when you tried to make a health behaviour change but weren't able to because something got in the way (e.g. couldn't go to the gym because you had to study, work, clean the house, take care of the kids, watch television, play online games etc.). That "thing that got in the way" is likely a priority. Also, anything you spend a lot of time doing is likely a priority.

| My Priorities | | |
|---------------|--|--|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

After reviewing your other priorities, which of the following statements best applies to you?

- After reviewing my other priorities, I believe that I have enough time, energy and other resources to dedicate to my health goal.
- After reviewing my other priorities, I am not sure that I have enough time, energy and other resources to dedicate to my health goal.
- After reviewing my other priorities, I definitely do not have enough time, energy and other resources to dedicate to my health goal.

- **Other barriers**

Another strategy to enhance your belief in your ability to achieve your goal is to identify potential barriers that you may encounter and to plan for what you will do in case you encounter them. By problem-solving ahead of time you will likely realize that the barriers are not as insurmountable as you may think. You will also be prepared the next time they arise and you will be able to overcome them more easily.

EXERCISE 2.6

OTHER BARRIERS TO MAKING CHANGES



Below, identify any significant barriers to achieving your goal that you may encounter and then identify what you will do to overcome them. One common barrier is lack of dedication to the the process of behaviour change, which includes failing to complete all the activities in this workbook. If you have not yet completed the activities that precede this one, go back and complete them before returning to this exercise. If a person does not invest the time in completing these exercises, it is likely that they will not invest the time in making the required changes to reach their goal.

| Possible Barrier | What I can do to overcome this barrier |
|------------------|--|
| | |
| | |

exercise continued on next page

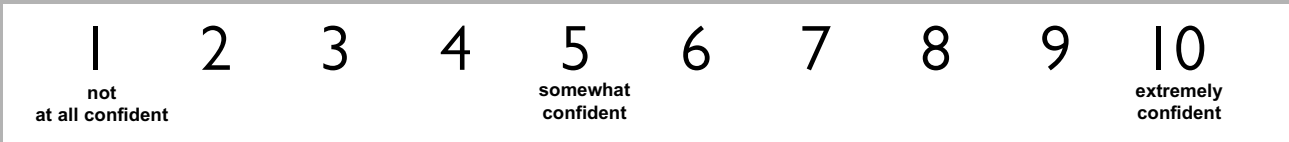


| Possible Barrier | What I can do to overcome this barrier |
|------------------|--|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Putting it together: How confident am I in my ability to achieve my goal?

In the introduction to Step 2 we pointed out that developing commitment to a goal is crucial and involves two factors: importance and belief in ability to make the change. Even if a person sees a goal as very important, they are not going to make lasting changes unless they believe that they are able to do what it takes to achieve the goal. Exercises 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 helped you identify your strengths and skills as well as identify barriers to making changes, including competing priorities. Take a few minutes to review your answers to these exercises; then, complete the following exercise:

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 representing “not at all confident” and 10 representing “extremely confident”), **HONESTLY** rate how confident you are that you can make the changes needed to achieve your goal.



If you rated your confidence as low, you likely will not wholeheartedly commit to this goal. After all, why would you invest time, energy and other resources into something that you don’t believe you will be able to do? Before you move ahead in this workbook you will benefit by giving more thought to your belief in your ability to make changes. There are some things we have listed below that can move your confidence rating to a higher number. Put some thought into these and then go back and rate confidence in your ability again.

- **Review each of the exercises and give each one more thought.** Did you identify as many skills and strengths as possible? (If you didn’t identify enough to fill in the 5 spaces we provided, return to the exercise and add more. If you did use all 5 spaces, grab another sheet of paper and identify a few more.) Did you think of the many possible ways you can use your skills and strengths? As you identify more skills and strengths and how you will use them, your belief in your ability will grow. Did you list all important priorities? Are some of your priorities truly not all that important, especially when compared to your health? Did you think about all the possible ways you can overcome the barriers you listed in Exercise 2.6?

- **Review past successes.** Did you list 3 goals you have achieved in the past? Think about these successes and how you were able to achieve them. At first they may have seemed quite challenging, but you faced the challenge and succeeded! What resources did you tap into to be successful?
- **Look at people like you.** One proven way to build your self-efficacy is to identify people like you who have already achieved the goal you have identified. These people likely faced similar barriers while working towards their goal. They were able to overcome these barriers. How did they do it? When we see someone similar to us succeed, it enhances our belief in our ability to succeed.
- **Use positive self-talk.** Another way to build self-efficacy is to use positive self-talk. Self-talk is those messages we tell ourselves that no one can hear. With positive self-talk you repeatedly tell yourself that you are capable of doing what you put your mind to. Identify negative self-talk and reword it in a positive way. Instead of saying “I can’t do this”, tell yourself “This is going to be a challenge, but I am ready and able to face it because it will make my life better”.
- **Talk to those who are encouraging.** Besides using positive self-talk, you can also connect with others who are encouraging and supportive. When you tell these people what you want to achieve, they will likely express confidence that you can do it. These people can be supportive throughout the change process, but in the beginning they can be instrumental in building your belief in yourself.

Are you ready to start working on your goal?

At the beginning of this section we pointed out that commitment to the goal is critical to success. Your heart has to be in it. You have to reach a point where you see the behaviour as a gift, not a deprivation—where nothing will get in the way of achieving this important goal.

Examine the final ratings you have given to the questions of importance (page 8) and your belief in the ability to make changes (page 11). If you rated both importance and ability as high you are ready to move on to the next step. You don’t need to score a “10” on each to be ready to move on. In fact, as you begin making changes and start reaping the benefits, you likely will see that your goal as even more important than you did at first, and also confirm that you have what it takes to make your goal a reality.

If you score low on either importance or your belief in your ability (or both) and choose not to work to build either of these, then you are not ready to change. Continuing with the exercises in this workbook would likely lead to failure, which would further undermine your belief in your ability to change in the future.

If you are not willing—or not able—to commit to the work and effort required to achieve your goal, then you have two choices. The first is that you can return to Step 1 and set a more realistic goal. Continue working through the exercises with this new, more realistic goal in mind.

The second choice is to realize and accept that you are not ready to make the necessary changes to achieve the goal. This includes accepting that you will not reap the benefits that achieving your goal would bring. Many people wish to lose weight, yet they are not willing to do the work it takes to do it. They often feel bad for not changing their exercise and/or nutrition behaviours. This is not helpful. Instead of feeling bad, a person should just accept that losing weight is not a priority. They need to be honest with themselves and accept that other things are more important.

Change does not happen by accident: It takes meaningful, intentional action. If you don’t want to commit to the work, be honest with yourself and move on to other interests, pursuits and priorities.

STEP 3: MAKE THE PLAN

Achieving a goal can be a complex process that involves completing many individual tasks. For example, the tasks involved in achieving a nutritional goal might include learning more about the various nutrients, learning how to plan a day of healthy eating, generating a shopping list, learning how to read a food label, finding and preparing healthy recipes, buying food storage containers, identifying shops that sell produce at good value in the neighbourhood, scheduling time every evening or every weekend to prepare meals, developing a repertoire of quick, easy-to-make meals...and the list goes on.

In this third step of the change process you will identify the tasks that you need to do to achieve the goal you have written in Exercise 1.1. Some goals require just a few tasks; others require many. We have divided this section into several different categories of tasks to make this process easier.

Before you continue, take some time to think about the strategies you will use to achieve your goal. What changes do you think you can make? For example, if you have a nutrition goal you may see yourself cooking at home more often, bringing your lunch to work/school or going grocery shopping more often. If you have a physical activity goal you might see yourself going to the gym 3 days a week and playing basketball with friends twice a week. Visualizing the things you will do to achieve your goal can greatly help you with the exercises in this section. Complete exercise 3.1 and write down some things you plan to do to achieve your goal.

EXERCISE 3.1

WHAT MY HEALTH GOAL MIGHT LOOK LIKE



Below, write down some things you plan to do to achieve your health goal:

• Build Skills

A skill can be defined as the ability to do something well. Skills are learned, often through training. Since a skill refers to knowing how to do something, the word “how” often introduces a skill. Examples of skills include: how to read a food label, how to use a condom correctly, how to negotiate effectively, how to check your heart rate, how to identify the number of calories in a food, how to say “no”, how to correctly lift weights or how to recognize hunger and satiety cues. Some of the tasks involved in reaching your goal may require building skills. Complete Exercise 3.2 to identify the skills you need to build and how you will build them.

EXERCISE 3.2

SKILLS I NEED TO BUILD



Below, list the skills you need to build to achieve your health goal, write down how you will build them and then go out and actually build the skill. Once you feel confident about your ability, place a ✓ in the box next to the skill.

| Skill | How I will build this skill: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|-------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

exercise continued on next page

| Skill | How I will build this skill: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|-------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

• Gather information

Making changes usually requires gathering information and building knowledge related to the change. A person who has set a physical activity goal may need to gather information about the services, equipment, and monthly fees of local gyms; learn about recommended number of sets and reps in weight lifting; or learn about the best clothing for walking outdoors in winter conditions. A person with a nutrition goal may need to learn more about proteins, fats and carbohydrates; learn about healthy cooking techniques such as broiling and grilling; or learn which foods are high in fiber.

Some of the tasks involved in reaching your goal may require gathering information. Complete exercise 3.3 to identify the information you need gather and how you will obtain it.

EXERCISE 3.3 INFORMATION I NEED TO GATHER 

Below, list the information you will need to gather to achieve the goal you have written in Exercise 1.1. Then identify how you will get that information. Finally, when you have obtained that information and understand it place a ✓ in the third column.

| Information | How I will obtain this information | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|-------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

• **Get support from others**

Research reveals that social support is an important factor in successful behaviour change. Social support refers to the network of family, friends, co-workers, neighbours and others who can offer encouragement or assistance. People can provide practical, emotional, financial or other types of help. Some examples of social support include:

- a person who has set a nutrition goal asks a good friend to teach him how to prepare a few healthful dishes or he asks his parents (who shop for, and prepare, the food at home) to include plenty of fruit and vegetables in the weekly shopping and to include extra vegetables and less meat in his servings;
- a person who has set a physical activity goal asks a friend to be her walking partner or asks her parents to be encouraging;
- a person who has set a sleep goal asks his roommates to turn down the sound on the television in the evenings after he has gone to bed.

Some of the tasks involved in reaching your goal may include garnering the support of others. Complete Exercise 3.4 to identify who can support you and how they can support you.

EXERCISE 3.4 **SOCIAL SUPPORT I CAN GET** 

Below, list the people who you believe can support you in achieving the goal you have written in Exercise 1.1. Next identify what type of support you would like to receive from these people. Finally, place a ✓ in the third column when you have spoken with that person and they have agreed to support you.

| Who can support me | How they can support me | ✓ |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

• **Change your environment**

Healthy behaviours are much easier to carry out if the environment supports it. For example, being physically active is easier if there are bike paths and safe walking trails in the area; eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is easier if there are several stores in the neighbourhood that sell quality produce at good prices. These are examples where the environment is already shaped for us. However, there are things a person can do to shape their environment so that it encourages and supports the actions needed to reach a health goal. For example, a person who wishes to achieve a nutrition goal can fill his pantry and refrigerator with healthy foods, remove unhealthy ones from the house or buy equipment that makes healthy cooking easier—such as a slow cooker or food processor. A person with a physical activity goal can clear a spot in her living room for doing exercises or buy exercise DVDs.

Complete Exercise 3.5 to identify the changes you can make in your environment to support your goal.



Below, list the things you can do to structure an environment that is supportive of your behaviour change. Next, identify how you will do it and, finally, place a ✓ in the third column once you have successfully made the change.

| Change to environment | How I will do it | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

• Other tasks and strategies

The previous exercises in this step have prompted you to identify tasks in several categories that included skills, information, and support from others. There may be other tasks or strategies that don't fit neatly into these categories. For example, if part of your goal is to eat 9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day, some tasks and strategies to achieve that might include:

- I will make a grocery shopping list every week.
- My grocery shopping list will include at least 4 types of vegetables and 4 types of fruit.
- When I go shopping I will head first to the fruit and vegetable aisle.
- I will include a piece of fruit or a serving of vegetables in at least 2 of my 3 snacks each day.
- Each week I will seek out and prepare one new vegetable dish or side dish.
- I will buy a cookbook with healthy recipes.
- I will have at least two different vegetables with supper.
- I will buy a slow cooker to make cooking easier.

Complete Exercise 3.6 to identify the other tasks and strategies that can help you reach your goal.



Below, identify any barriers you may likely encounter to achieving your goal and then identify what you will do to overcome them.

| Possible barrier | What I will do if I encounter this barrier |
|------------------|--|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

• Identify and implement rewards

The final part of the plan that will increase the chances of successfully achieving your health goal is to identify and implement rewards. Rewards can act as incentives and encourage attainment of your goal because they provide immediate and tangible feedback.

Some tips for identifying rewards:

- A reward should be something you truly enjoy.
- A reward should be good for you (having a cigarette after doing a yoga class is not a valid reward).
- Rewards can be monetary (e.g. paying yourself or giving to charity), non-monetary (e.g. clothes, electronics), activities/social (e.g. going to the movies, having friends over for dinner), relaxation (e.g. a hot bath, a massage) etc.
- Some should be quick and easy to implement (e.g. buying a CD); others can be more intensive (e.g. putting away money for a trip to Europe).



In the spaces below, identify 9 rewards that you can give yourself for achieving your goal and sticking with it.

| | | |
|----|----|----|
| 1. | 4. | 7. |
| 2. | 5. | 8. |
| 3. | 6. | 9. |

STEP 4: MONITOR

Now that you have set a S.M.A.R.T. goal, have built commitment to achieving and maintaining it, and have broken it down into specific tasks that you are presently carrying out, what remains is to make sure that you are on track. This is where monitoring comes in. Research is clear about this fact: **those who monitor are much more likely to achieve and maintain their goal than those who don't.** This makes sense. If you are tracking your progress you will know whether or not you are on track. If you are not on track, you can take steps to get back on track. If you are on track, you can note what is helpful and continue those behaviours.

Monitoring involves documenting the behaviours that contribute to the goal. The most important thing to monitor is your S.M.A.R.T. goal. Since one of the characteristics of a S.M.A.R.T. goal is that it is “measurable” (i.e. it has numbers in it), it should be easy to monitor. For example, if your goal is to engage in moderate physical activity for 150 minutes a week, you can use a calendar to document how many minutes of moderate physical activity you did each day during the week and add them up at the end of the week. If that total is 150 minutes, you have achieved your goal.

| Day | Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Total |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----------------|
| Physical activity (mins) | 30 | 0 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 0 | 30 | <i>150 mins</i> |

As another example, if a person has the nutrition goal on page 2, then she can create a monitoring sheet similar to the one to the right. As you can see, she has placed her goal for the day at the top of the monitoring sheet and has added up the servings she has eaten at the bottom. On this day her total for the day and her goal are the same—so she has achieved her nutrition goal. Note that she has not only monitored quantity (e.g. “1 cup”, “75 grams”, “2 Tbsp”), she has also monitored the quality of what she has eaten (e.g. “whole grain”, “unsweetened”, “low-fat”).

Besides monitoring your S.M.A.R.T. goal you can also monitor the tasks that you have identified in Step 3. We have already provided boxes in several of the activities where you can check off a task once you have completed it. This is a form of monitoring. Beyond these, you can develop a way to monitor other tasks you have identified. It is **IMPERATIVE** that you monitor your S.M.A.R.T. goal, but you don't have to monitor the tasks and strategies from Step 3.

Monitoring is an extremely effective tool to help you achieve your goals. However, you only get out of it as much as you put in. The more aspects of your goal that you monitor, and the more often you monitor, the greater your chances of achieving your goal. You don't have to monitor for the rest of your life, but until the health behaviours identified in your goal become part of your lifestyle, monitoring helps you stay on track.

After monitoring, you still have work to do! You don't monitor for the sake of monitoring. Rather, you must review your monitoring sheet every day—or every week in the case of weekly health goals such as physical activity goals—and then ask yourself “Did I achieve my goal today?” If the answer is “yes”...GREAT! You can think about the things you did that helped you reach your goal and repeat them on other days. If the answer to the question is “no” then you need to ask yourself: “Why didn't I achieve my goal today?” After you have given that question some thought, answer the question: “What can I do tomorrow so that I will be back on track?” Then you do some problem solving and put things in place that will get you back on track. Write down these questions and the answers to them on your monitoring sheet so you don't lose track of these ideas.

| Date: _____ | F/V | Gr | Milk | Meat | Oil | cal |
|---|-----|----|------|------|-----|-----|
| My Goal for the day | 9 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 150 |
| Breakfast | | | | | | |
| 1 whole grain bagel | | 2 | | | | |
| 2 Tablespoon raspberry jam | | | | | | 50 |
| 1 Tablespoon non-hydrogenated margarine | | | | | 1 | |
| 1 banana | 1 | | | | | |
| 1 cup unsweetened orange juice | 2 | | | | | |
| Mid-morning snack | | | | | | |
| ¼ cup almonds | | | | 1 | | |
| Lunch | | | | | | |
| 1 cup pasta | | 2 | | | | |
| 1 cup tomato and vegetable pasta sauce | 2 | | | | | |
| Salad: 1 cup lettuce + ½ cup chopped vegetables | 2 | | | | | |
| 1 Tablespoon low-fat salad dressing | | | | | 1 | |
| Mid-afternoon snack | | | | | | |
| 1 Low-fat granola bar | | | | | | 100 |
| ¾ cup low-fat yogurt | | | 1 | | | |
| Dinner | | | | | | |
| 75 grams grilled salmon | | | | 1 | | |
| 1 cup rice | | 2 | | | | |
| 1 cup roasted vegetables | 2 | | | | | |
| 1Tbsp olive oil for roasting veggies | | | | | 1 | |
| Evening snack | | | | | | |
| 50 grams cheese | | | 1 | | | |
| My Total for the day | 9 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 150 |