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Strategies Proven to Help People Eat Healthier and Exercise More

PLANNING AHEAD

Planning ahead and setting goals are key.

“SMART” goals are:

S: Specific

- If you plan to exercise, think carefully about what you plan to do, when, how much, and how often. (I will walk 3 blocks after work Monday, Wednesday, and Friday this week.)

M: Measurable

- Write down how far or how long you walk each day. Some people like to use a pedometer (such as Fitbit) and write down how many steps they take each day.
- One way you can pay attention to what you eat is to track calories by writing down your food intake. Free apps for your phone or computer, such as MyFitnessPal or Lose It!, can help you do this.
- Another important measure to track is your weight. Experts recommend weighing at least once a week, around the same time of day, wearing the same amount of clothing. But remember, weight changes slowly; keeping track is to help you see how you are doing and to let you know if you may need to adjust your plan.

A: Achievable

- Set realistic and reasonable goals. For example, if your goal is to walk, start with 10 to 20 minutes a day, 4 days a week.
- When making a plan, consider your schedule, weather, etc.
- Achievable goals also include taking a dance class twice a week, switching from sugary sodas to flavored water or Crystal Light, or packing a healthy lunch 3 days a week.

R: Relevant

- Set a goal that you are ready to work on. Think of what will motivate you to stick to your plan, such as building up your endurance to be able to walk with your child or to restart playing a fun sport.

T: Time-bound

- Set goals that you can realistically complete in a specific amount of time. (I will lose 2 to 4 pounds a month for 3 months or until I lose the weight I want to lose.)

PROBLEM SOLVING

Losing weight and keeping it off call for problem solving and support.

One of the best ways to work through challenges is to ask friends, family, a dietitian, or other healthcare provider to help you solve problems that come up.

- Many benefit from building a team of people who are also attempting to lose weight. Support can also come from group programs such as Weight Watchers.
- Several apps offer opportunities to connect with a weight loss community (such as SparkPeople or MyNetDiary).

STAYING MOTIVATED

Even with the best made plans and a strong support team, it can be hard to stay motivated.

- Remind yourself of your goals, write them down, and put them where you will see them every day. Think about why you want to lose weight, like having more energy, feeling less pain in your knees and back, or being able to play on the floor with your children or grandchildren.
- Praise yourself and reward yourself for sticking with your plan. Be kind to yourself. Don't beat yourself up for slipping.
- Remember, it takes time and a long-term commitment to lose weight and make lasting health changes.

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