



Goal Setting for Behavior Change

“A goal properly set is halfway reached.” — Zig Ziglar

Changing habits to consciously improve your health is no small undertaking, and making the decision to change is just the first step. Actively thinking about and planning for change will help prepare you for the process and motivate you to stay on track.

When you're ready to make a change, it is often helpful to set tangible goals. These goals can be short-term (daily, weekly, monthly) or long-term (6–12 months). When goal setting for behavior change, it's also helpful to set goals that are SMART—specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. The table below lists some examples of SMART goals.

SMART Goal Component	Example
Specific State the desired outcome as explicitly as possible, and target a specific area for improvement. This is the “who, what, where, when, which, and why” of your goal.	I will walk at least five days per week in the evenings to help me reduce my waist size (in inches).
Measurable Identify the ways in which you will track your progress, and be as specific as possible. This is the “how” of your goal.	I will meditate for 30 minutes a day five times a week in order to lower my stress levels and blood pressure.
Action-oriented Start with small, achievable goals that are easily outlined into specific steps that will enable you to complete the goal. Then, as you meet those smaller goals, work up to intermediate goals and goals that are more difficult to achieve.	I will make an effort to move my body for at least 15 minutes three days a week, increasing my time each week by five minutes until I reach 30 minutes per day. I will add an extra day every two to four weeks until I reach 30-60 minutes for five days a week.
Realistic Create a goal that you are both willing and able to accomplish.	I will begin my bedtime ritual one hour before bedtime, which will help me fall asleep faster each night.
Timely Set a deadline or time for achieving your goal to help keep you motivated.	Over the next month, I will start eating breakfast every day. For the first week, I will make breakfast (or prepare it ahead the night before) twice per week. In the second week, I will make breakfast three times per week. In the third week, I will make breakfast five times per week. In the fourth week, I will make breakfast every day.

To begin setting your own SMART goals, flip the page and fill in the information in the template provided.

SMART HEALTH GOALS

Date _____

Name _____ Age _____ Gender _____

SMART Health Goals are:

Specific ■ Measurable ■ Action-oriented ■ Realistic ■ Timely

SMART Health Goal	Does the goal require adding or eliminating a behavior?	What is the first action step to accomplish the goal?	What is the start date, timeframe, or deadline for taking action?