



TRINITY
school of natural health

Healthy Goal Setting

5 Tips for Success

BY TRINITY SCHOOL OF NATURAL HEALTH

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The most important aspect of goal setting is to
make sure it works for you.

————— It can be difficult to maintain new, healthy habits. We often have big ideas for improving ourselves, but life can get in the way.

There are many ways to work on self-improvement, but creating specific, personal goals for growth can increase your likelihood of success. Keep in mind that your objectives might not match your friends' targets. The most important aspect of goal setting is to make sure it works for you. You should also avoid comparing yourself to others. Instead, build a plan that fits your needs and desires.

Healthy goal setting can give you the motivation to stay focused and follow through. However, establishing goals can sometimes feel daunting, and that's why it's important to have a roadmap. Most experts recommend following the "SMART" method.

SMART GOALS

SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely—they help people define and act on their intentions.¹ But, even if you are highly motivated to change certain health habits, the process can be burdensome without a plan. Setting a SMART goal requires you to consider the factors involved in achieving your desired outcome. Defining each of these five characteristics can help make the path to success clearer.



S: SPECIFIC

- Be clear and detailed.
- Example: “I want to walk for 30 minutes before breakfast three times per week.”

M: MEASURABLE

- Use a set of criteria or numerical values to measure progress.
- The goal of exercising five times per week can be tracked on a calendar or your phone.

A: ATTAINABLE

- Ensure it’s possible to achieve. Your doctor or a health professional can help you determine this aspect of your goals from a physical and health standpoint.
- Goals should challenge you but still be feasible.

R: RELEVANT

- Make sure it is appropriate and relevant to your life and interests.
- If your goal is to switch to a plant-based diet, but you don’t actually enjoy plant-based foods, then you are far less likely to succeed.²

T: TIMELY

- Choose a realistic timeframe, with a start and end date, but not too far into the future.
- “I will do yoga three times a week for five weeks.”

SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely—they help people define and act on their intentions.



1. SETTING SPECIFIC GOALS

There's a reason that being specific is the first step in creating a SMART goal. Specificity can take the guesswork, and the stress, out of your plans. It allows your brain to focus on the essential tasks and take the necessary steps to achieve them. Specificity also helps incorporate the method into the goal, not just the outcome. So, state your objectives as clearly as possible. Rather than saying, "I want to lose weight," set a distinct, activity-related goal like riding your bike, joining a dance class, or working with a health coach.

2. SETTING MEASURABLE GOALS

Often, not reaching a goal can be interpreted as a personal failure. Even if you take major steps to change your habits, you still may not reach a goal as quickly as you hope. If you have a weight-related goal in mind, it is more effective to break it into smaller, measurable steps like tracking your weight or creating a checklist.³ Counting off the numbers, or checking boxes, as you progress will feel good. For example, the goal of exercising five times per week can be tracked on a calendar, in a journal, or on your phone. You can also use creative methods for monitoring your progress. If you want to reduce stress, consider setting a goal to take a 20-minute meditation break once a day. Record a voice memo with notes about your sessions as well as your stress levels.

3. SETTING ATTAINABLE GOALS

Setting an attainable goal means that it can be reached with effort, accountability, and planning. Accomplishing difficult goals may feel more rewarding than achieving easier goals, but arduous tasks are only motivating to a point. In addition to your SMART goal, aim to set "stretch goals" that challenge you enough to push you, but not so much that they seem unreachable.⁴ A stretch goal is a high-effort and high-risk goal. It is intentionally set above normal standards to attract exponential rewards and experience. Stretch goals are set to inspire growth.⁵

While stretch goals can encourage you to do more than you ever thought possible, don't set yourself up for failure by creating unrealistic goals, especially when there are unforeseen setbacks. For instance, setting a target to gain 10 pounds of muscle in a week is difficult, unhealthy, and nearly impossible. Instead, you could set a goal to increase the weight you're lifting in the gym by five pounds each month. Overall, both SMART goals and stretch goals should challenge you but not be unfeasible in the long or short term.

4. SETTING RELEVANT GOALS

People are more dedicated to pursuing goals that are of personal importance to them. Yet, many of us spend time completing tasks that aren't immediately interesting to us—like cleaning the house or writing emails. There's nothing wrong with “uninteresting” goals, which are often necessary, but make sure some of your objectives are valuable and relevant to you as an individual.

Goals should also inspire motivation. If you don't care about the goal, you won't be determined. So, next time you set a goal, ask yourself why. Do you want to eat healthier foods because your friends are doing it? Or do you want to take action because you genuinely care about what you're consuming? Understanding your motivation behind a goal will help you determine whether you're willing to make it a priority.

5. SETTING TIMELY GOALS

Choose a timeframe for your goal that is realistic but not too far into the future. Saying “I will get in shape this year” sounds promising, but saying “I will do yoga for 30 minutes four times per week for two months” provides a more reasonable schedule and gives you a finish line. Once you reach the two-month mark, evaluate your progress and set a new goal based on what you've learned.

Or, if your goal is to run a half-marathon at the end of the year, set target dates for hitting certain milestones. If you're a beginner, you might set the following objective: “In one month, I want to be able to run one mile without walking.” After that achievement, you can select another: “In three weeks, I want to be able to run one mile in under 10 minutes.” You are then able to break up your overall aim of a half-marathon into daily, weekly, and monthly approach-oriented accomplishments.

Conclusion **Healthy Goal Setting: 5 Tips for Success**

By establishing clear, personal, and attainable goals, you can measure and take pride in your achievements. You can also increase your self-confidence as you begin to recognize all that your mind, body, and spirit can do. When life challenges you, goals can help you reset, recommit, and recharge.

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