

# Healthy Habits: Making Lifestyle Changes

## Making Lifestyle Changes Stick

The New Year has come and gone, and if you're like many Americans, so too has your resolution. Not to fear; there still is hope to pick back up that resolution, dust it off, and try again, only a little differently this time.

Any kind of life change you want to make can be called a resolution. Instead of using that term, why not call it what it is – a lifestyle change! Do you want to better manage stress, eat healthier, become more physically active or sleep more soundly? These are all lifestyle changes. To achieve these changes, our lifestyles actually need to change as well.



## Where to begin?

Making a lifestyle change does not need to be taxing. All that is required is to know where you are currently and where you want to be (the outcome.) Yes, it is that simple. After that step is determined, the next step is to establish the basic goals needed to achieve the desired outcome. If the outcome is to lose 15 pounds, some of the goals could be eating healthier, drinking more water and increasing physical activity. Everyone will have different goals depending on their starting point (back to step one.)

## How do you eat an elephant?

One bite at a time. This is especially true when setting goals. Starting small, with one bite, is much more realistic and overall more successful than going for the whole elephant in one sitting. Making a lifestyle change is a long-term plan; setting smaller goals will lead to longer-term success. If running a marathon is the outcome but walking one mile is taxing, some training will be needed before heading to that starting line. Begin with small steps; work up to walking two miles easily, then three, until you're ready to run that 5K. One bite at a time.

The next step is to think SMART. SMART goals are those used when working on goals to achieve outcomes:

- **S**pecific: What precisely do I want to achieve. Determine details.
- **M**easurable: How much/how many?
- **A**ttainable: Can this outcome be met?
- **R**ealistic: Is this too much right now?
- **T**imely: Is there enough time to complete goal?

Using SMART goals to help you determine your goals and outcomes will make the process easier. Once this step is complete, you know, in detail, what you want to do and how you will do it.

## Why are you doing this?

After determining your SMART goals, the next step is confirming why you want or need to make the change. This step is important so that you know exactly why *you*, not your co-worker or spouse, want to make this change. This is based solely on you and cannot be determined by anyone else.

- Why do you want to make this lifestyle change?
- Have you ever tried to make this change before?
  - If yes, were you successful?
  - If not, what stopped you from making the change?

- How did your results (successful or not) make you feel?
- Do you have a support system/accountability partner in this venture?
  - What can that support system/accountability partner do to help you succeed?

After asking these questions, you will have a better sense of why you want to do this and, perhaps, why previous attempts have not worked. Also, you will need some kind of support, whether a friend, a mentor, a spouse, or a child. And, you can have more than one. This is someone to whom you are accountable, someone who can check to see how you are progressing. The most important part of determining this partner is to ensure it is someone who genuinely cares about you and with whom you can be honest. Only select an accountability partner who meets these criteria.

The final step is to take action. You have the tools to succeed; set those goals and make that change. You can do it, one bite at a time!

