



POSITIVE PATTERNS FOR LIFE

Write Successful Goals

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL GOALS

Be realistic. Rework your lifestyle gradually. Set small, easy goals. Do not spread yourself too thin. Unrealistic goals set an individual up for failure, and are frustrating and demoralizing. Easy goals encourage you and let you be successful. Small goals are believable and therefore achievable.

Write positive goals. Positive goals are more pleasurable. It is easier to add a new self-care behavior than it is to stop an existing habit. Negative goals can actually make the thing you are trying to give up, more tempting. People naturally feel obstinate toward goals that tell them not to do something.

Be specific. Be clear about what you want and why you want it. Write your goals so you can measure your success. It is easier to perform a self-care action when you have a clear picture in your mind of what you want to accomplish.

Connect pleasure to your goal. Experience pleasure while you perform your goal. Behavior is driven by an instinctive reaction to pain and pleasure, not intellectual processing. The brain finds ways to avoid pain. It is a survival mechanism. It is very important that you experience pleasure during or soon after the performance of your self-care goal.

Be flexible. No health improvement plan should be ridged. Leave room for mistakes, mishaps, off days and little diversions.

CREATE YOUR GOAL

Write it down. Committing your goals on paper will make them more visible and tangible. There is truth to the saying, “Out of sight out of mind”. Use the **Positive Patterns for Life – Goals Worksheet** to write our your health goals.

Divide and conquer. Chopping your goal into several intermediate steps can make it seem less overwhelming and more achievable. Each intermediate step should be written as small, easy, realistic goals.

Prioritize goals. Decide which ones are the most important and then number them accordingly.

Choose a reward/reinforcement system. Rewards serve as an incentive to continue to work toward accomplishing your goals and motivate you to set new self-care goals. Rewards should be something special, enjoyable, and fit into your budget. Rewards should be such that you anticipate receiving them. There are

four types of rewards: 1) Benefit – body positively responds to self-care action (feel energized after a walk); 2) Reinforcement – an immediate response to self-care behavior (every time you eat a serving of vegetables you put a quarter in your pocket or get a 5 minute music break); 3) Cumulative reward – you receive a token for performing your self-care action and when the tokens total to a certain number, you receive your reward (receive a point for every serving of vegetables you eat and when you have 100 points you will buy yourself a new DVD); 4) Jackpot reward – receive one huge reward after completing a big, time consuming goal (you go on a raft trip after accomplishing your whole health improvement plan).

Rewards can be actual money that you receive or you can buy something for yourself (gift, book, clothing, sporting good, etc.). A reward can be a special activity (fishing, go to a show, shopping trip, new freedom, etc.). It can be something someone else agrees to do for you (give you a massage, do your chores, clean the garage, etc.). If your reward affects your family members or friends, make sure you talk to them about what you are trying to do. Get their support before they become involved.

COMMIT TO YOUR GOAL!

Set a start date. Change starts in the brain. Allow your brain 3 to 14 days to mentally prepare for the implementation of your self-improvement plan. During this preparation period, a couple different things should happen. Record your start date on the **Positive Patterns for Life – Goals Chart**.

First, you should become committed to your self-improvement plan before you start. Make a decision that this plan is a priority in your life. You will need to dedicate time, energy and thought every day to this new priority. Another part of commitment is having a mind-set of persistence. Decide how badly you really want to reach this goal. Believe that nothing will stop you from achieving your goal. You are determined to follow this plan through to the end. Be determined to find solutions when problems arise, instead of giving up when the going gets rough. The moment your commit to changing your behavioral patterns, this is the moment your destiny is shaped. Commitment to your goals will turn your dreams into reality.

Second, take time to identify the costs and benefits connected with your self-improvement plan. Costs are things we give up or discomforts we endure in order to reach our goals. Common costs include: time, energy, money, or the discomfort associated with beginning an exercise program or giving up sweets. Benefits are something positive we receive as a result of our efforts. Some examples of benefits include: increased energy, uplifted mood, stronger immune system, more shapely body, improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and prevention of life-threatening diseases. Make a list of anticipated costs and benefits. Carefully compare the two lists. Do the benefits outweigh the costs? Commitment should not be taken lightly – give serious consideration to the cost of making your goal a priority in your life.

Third, use positive self-talk, affirmations, visualizations to mentally prepare yourself for action. Pump yourself up for the start date.

Fourth, make a list of the actions steps you need to take to prepare for the start date of your goal. An example of action steps for a walking program might include: talk to the family about time needed for walking, designate the time of day you will walk, purchase walking shoes, and come up with an alternative plan for bad weather. Make sure you have every detail worked out and everything you need for a successful start.

Fifth, anticipate potential roadblocks and develop a roadblock prevention plan. A roadblock is something that interferes with the completion of a self-care action. Common roadblocks include lack of time or energy or money or family support, a ridged schedule, and bad weather. The most difficult roadblocks include: fear of

failure; belief that one is undeserving of better health; and discomfort associated with change. Fear failure is one of the most common reasons why people don't try to attempt self-improvement. Most individuals interpret the tiniest deviation from their plan to be failure. This is not failure. Real failure is when a person totally abandons their self-improvement efforts. Everything else during the self-improvement journey is a learning experience or an opportunity to practice problem solving skills or just a normal variation of daily patterns. Success comes with the fact that you are continuing on your self-improvement journey. An occasional stumble, rest period or slip backward is not failure, but just a normal part of any journey.

Another powerful roadblock is the belief that an individual is undeserving of better health. Use positive self-talk, affirmations, visualizations and journal writing to rid yourself of this destructive mindset.

Discomfort associated with change can also be a roadblock. Discomfort is a normal part of change. The good news is that, it is temporary. In time, the change you are making will become a comfortable habit. It is hard for an individual to stay motivated when they perceive the discomfort of change to be greater than the immediate benefits being received. During these tough times, explore ways to increase pleasure associated with your new self-care pattern. Enhance your reward system. Shift your focus to the long-term benefits associated with your self-improvement plan. Remember this discomfort is temporary.

Sixth, tell your close friends and family members what you are trying to achieve and how you are trying to do it. If goals interfere with family or social life, you could be headed for trouble. Your goals not only need to fit your needs, they also need to take into consideration the social needs of the family. Friends and family can become roadblocks.

Seventh, get a goal partner or join a group. People who work on goals with a partner tend to be more successful than those who go it alone. If someone else is counting on you, it acts as leverage to make yourself follow through with your plan. Groups generate motivation. Individuals who belong to a self-improvement group benefit from group generated motivation.

TAKE ACTION!

Choose up to 4 health goals from your **Goals Worksheet** and write them to your **Goals Chart**. If you are choosing to start with big habit changes, only choose 1 or 2 goals to start with. If you decide to start with small habit changes, you can write up to 4 goals on your chart (i.e. like taking a multivitamin every day or going to bed an hour earlier). It is important to start with small habit changes. Big changes can quickly become overwhelming and cause a person to abandon a new health improvement plan. Starting with a few small changes makes the plan believable and achievable.

It is time to take action. Stay committed! Be determined to succeed! Persist till you reach the peak!