

Improving Your Healthy Behaviors

Living a more healthy life—healthy eating, regular exercise, and taking the medications you need—is not so easy. You may also feel that your health care providers expect you to do it all. But there is a way to work with your providers and choose which healthy behaviors you want to work on. It’s called goal setting and action planning.

SETTING GOALS AND MAKING ACTION PLANS

An example of setting a goal would be to lose 10 lb or to exercise for a half hour every day. Goals are not so easy to achieve, so it is best to start with a specific action plan, a set of actions that little by little would help you meet your goal.

So let’s imagine you set a goal for yourself to lose 10 lb. The first step would be to think about the foods that make you gain weight; let’s pretend that you eat two candy bars every day. An action plan might be to reduce the candy bars to one per

day, and maybe after you succeed, you could cut down further to two candy bars per week. Many people have made action plans for similar goals and have succeeded, after a few months, in reaching their goal of losing 10 lb.

HOW TO SET GOALS AND MAKE ACTION PLANS

Many times doctors and health educators will tell you what your goals should be. They are trying to be helpful, but you will probably be more successful if you set your own goals, and—

together with your health care provider—make action plans that you feel will work.

The best way to set goals and make action plans is to do it with other people—your family or friends or other people at your work or school. Then you can help each other achieve your goals and check in with each other every week or so to see how you are both doing.

Healthy behaviors are really important for people who have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes or who weigh too much. Setting goals and making action plans is a smart way to work on getting healthier.