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SMART Goals for Exercise

Changing habits to increase physical activity is no small undertaking, and making the decision to be more active is just the first step. Actively thinking about and planning for exercise will help prepare you for the process and motivate you to stay on track.

When you are ready to make any lifestyle change, it is helpful to set tangible goals. These goals can be short term (daily, weekly, monthly) or long term (6 to 12 months). When goal setting, it is also helpful to set goals that are **SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely**. The following table lists some examples of SMART goals for exercise.

SMART Goal Components
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. · Example: I will ride my bike to work Monday, Wednesday, and Friday each week.
Measurable · Identify the ways in which you will track your progress, and be as specific as possible. This is the "how" of your goal. · Example: I will walk at least five days per week for 20 minutes in the evenings to lower my cholesterol.
Attainable · 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. · Example: I will walk for 15 minutes three days a week at lunch, increasing my time each week by 5 minutes until I reach 30 minutes per day. I will add an extra day every two to four weeks until I reach 30 minutes of walking five days a week.
Realistic · Create a goal that you are both willing and able to accomplish. · Example: I will stretch for 5 minutes before bedtime, followed by 5 minutes of breath work, which will help me fall asleep faster each night.
Timely · Set a deadline or time frame for achieving your goal to help keep you motivated. · Example: I will run a 5K by September 15th.

To begin setting your own SMART exercise goals, fill in the information in the template on the next page.

REFERENCES

1. American Council on Exercise. The science supporting the stages of change model. *Coaching Behavior Change*. 2nd ed. San Diego, CA: American Council on Exercise; 2019:46-57.
2. Bailey R. Goal setting and action planning for health behavior change. *Am J Lifestyle Med*. 2017;13(6):615-618. doi:10.1177/1559827617729634.

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Patient Name _____ Date _____

Instructions

Set SMART goals for exercise in the space provided. SMART goals are: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely.

SMART Exercise Goal #1:

What smaller steps or sub-goals can be created to help you achieve this goal?

What obstacles could get in the way of achieving this goal? How will you address these challenges?

What is your start date, time frame, or deadline for taking action?

SMART Exercise Goal #2:

What smaller steps or sub-goals can be created to help you achieve this goal?

What obstacles could get in the way of achieving this goal? How will you address these challenges?

What is your start date, time frame, or deadline for taking action?

SMART Exercise Goal #3:

What smaller steps or sub-goals can be created to help you achieve this goal?

What obstacles could get in the way of achieving this goal? How will you address these challenges?

What is your start date, time frame, or deadline for taking action?

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