



Changing health behaviors takes some patience



Why is it hard to fit exercise into my daily routine? I always seem to be too busy or I find an excuse why I shouldn't exercise. If you are feeling what I am feeling, you are not alone.

Changing a behavior means that you must change a daily routine. You may have performed

a routine every day for 10, 20, or 30 years.

No wonder it is difficult to change. If you are feeling what I am feeling, please join me in working through the struggle of changing a behavior.

- **Identify Behaviors You Wish to Change.**

The first step in changing a behavior is to identify the specific behavior that you wish to change. That change is your goal. For example: "I want to exercise on a regular basis".

- **Write Down Your Goals for Behavior Change**

Write a statement that expresses an image of how you see yourself in the future. Do you see yourself as strong, active, happy, healthy, and independent?

I ask you to focus on a specific image. My written statement is: "I see myself active and healthy!" My goal is: "I am going to increase my physical activity to three days a week" by the first day of spring.

Think **SMART** when writing a goal; let's use my goal as an example. "I am going to increase my physical activity to three days a week" by the first day of spring.

S — Specific: use action words such as increase, decrease.

M — Measurable: you will be able to see the change in your behavior

A — Attainable: 3-5 days a week is attainable

R — Realistic: 3-5 days is realistic

T — Time: putting an end point on your goal gives a clear target (the first day of spring) (

www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/state_program/evaluation_guides/smart_objectives.htm)

- **Action Steps for Achieving My Goals**

What action steps do you need to take to begin the process of changing your routine to meet your new goal?

Let's begin by writing down your daily routine for 5 days. Keeping an activity log of a typical day helps to identify and evaluate a daily routine.

You may find that you are spending a lot of time sitting at the computer or in front of the television!

I am sharing my action steps with you and passing along a few tips that I have learned along the way.

I am taking action today. I am moving the stationary bike into the TV room. I will ride my stationary bike at least 10 minutes every time that I begin to watch a TV show. (For those of you who don't have an exercise bike, you can march in place in front of the TV.) Another Action step is: I will walk outdoors or in my hallway at least 10 minutes after each meal. (You can also walk around in your house or apartment, too.) What are your actions steps? TIP: Begin with a small specific change that fits into your present routine.

- **Monitoring Progress**

Monitoring yourself allows you to review your progress. I like to log my activity on a calendar; others like to write their progress in a diary or in a notebook.

The activity log can also serve as a reminder to exercise, so keep it in a location where you will see it often. Place the activity log near the refrigerator or near the TV.

- **Reward Yourself**

Reward yourself! This is my favorite part of changing my routine. I plan to reward myself by going to a movie. TIP: Think of a reward that is nonfood related and something you look forward to doing.

Check with your doctor before you begin an exercise program and also share your goals and action steps with your doctor. Learn as much as you can about your body and your health.

In addition to the following resources at the Center for Healthy Aging Web sites, your local library and hospital offer services to help you learn more about your body:

www.healthyaging.pitt.edu;

www.healthyaging.pitt.edu/hr/weightliftinghandout.pdf

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