

2012: Jumpstart Your Healthy Change

We are continuously making choices that affect our health. Whether it is replacing an unhealthy snack with a piece of fruit, deciding to exercise instead of sitting down and watching TV or spending time to rejuvenate and de-stress. No matter the area for change it takes effort and a plan.

Instead of getting overwhelmed by the big picture break those wellness endeavors into tiny steps and you'll find it easier to succeed. Here are 7 steps to get you started.

1. Select a goal. Choose a goal that is the best fit for you. It may not be the first goal you feel you should choose. But you're much more likely to succeed if you set priorities that are compelling to you and feel attainable at present.
2. Ask a big question. Do I have a big dream that pairs with my goal? A big dream might be running a marathon, wiggling back into a closet full of clothes you love, cutting back on blood pressure medication, or playing games sports energetically with your children.
3. Pick your choice for change. Select a choice that feels like a sure bet. Do you want to eat healthier, stick to exercise, diet more effectively, ease stress? It's best to concentrate on just one choice at a time. When a certain change fits into your life comfortably, you can then focus on the next change.
4. Commit yourself. Make a written or verbal promise to yourself and one or two supporters you don't want to let down: your partner or child, a teacher, boss, or friends. Be explicit about the change you've chosen and why it matters to you.
5. Scout out easy obstacles. Maybe you'd love to try meditating, but can't imagine having the time to do it. Or perhaps your hopes for eating healthier run aground if you're hungry when you walk through the door at night, or your kitchen cabinets and refrigerator aren't well-stocked with healthy foods.
6. Brainstorm ways to leap over obstacles. Now think about ways to overcome those roadblocks. Not enough time? I'll get up 20 minutes early for exercises and fit in a 10-minute walk before lunch. Cupboard bare of healthy choices? I'll think about five to 10 healthy foods I enjoy and will put them on my grocery list.
7. Plan a simple reward. Is there a reward you might enjoy for a job well done? For example, if you hit most or all of your marks on planned activities for one week, you'll treat yourself to a splurge. Try to steer clear of food rewards, since this approach can be counterproductive.

Source: Harvard Medical School, Health Publications, HEALTHbeat