



Reaching Our Goals

Once your family, as a group, has assessed lifestyle habits and has decided on what to work on, an important step is to set goals and a plan of action. Most people have a large or vague goal that they want to reach, such as being more active or losing weight. This usually is the end point that they want to reach.

Your family started the first step of the assessment by writing down what everyone has eaten over 3 to 7 days. Keeping a journal or diary of everyone's eating and physical activity habits provides many benefits:

- ◆ Each family member becomes aware of his or her eating habits.
- ◆ Each family member becomes aware of his or her physical activity habits.
- ◆ Each family member increases control over his or her habits.

Once everyone becomes more aware of their habits, it is easier to see where changes are needed to reach long-term goals. To make a large goal a reality, it is helpful to break it down into manageable pieces, such as by setting weekly goals. So for example, to become more active think of the small steps that will help everyone reach their goals. Pardon the pun, but it is often as simple as putting one foot in front of the other, taking one step at a time!

Goal setting is important as it gives your family something to strive for. Set the standard that you will use to measure your family's progress. As you establish your family's weekly goals, keep the following in mind:

- ◆ Set goals that are specific
- ◆ Set goals that are measurable
- ◆ Set goals that are attainable
- ◆ Set goals that are realistic
- ◆ Set goals that have a timeframe

When you set your goals, try to think in terms of why, what, and how.

What is it that you truly want to accomplish?

Why do you want to make lifestyle changes?

How are you going to accomplish the goal?

Guidelines for Setting Realistic Goals



- ◆ **Set specific goals, not vague ones.**

Make your goals ones that you can count. Goals without a specific behaviour tend not to work because you cannot tell if you have met them. Instead of saying, "We will exercise more," promise yourselves to walk for 20 minutes three times a week.

- ◆ **Set "just for this week" or "just for today" goals.**

Work on short-term goals, rather than long-term desires. What are the small steps your family can achieve today: Have a piece of fruit for dessert? Use the stairs instead of the elevator?

- ◆ **Avoid "never," "always," and "every day" goals.**

Perfection or all-or-nothing thinking usually leads to failure. It encourages all-or-nothing behaviour and leaves no room for being human! It is more reasonable to set a goal that allows you to live with yourselves. For example, if your family loves potato chips and sets a goal of never eating them again - how realistic do you think that goal is? A far more reasonable and attainable goal is to set a goal of eating potato chips no more than once a week or only at certain occasions.

- ◆ **Set goals based on where you are now, not where you want to be.**

Reasonable goals are based on your past and current behaviour. You have to examine where you're coming from, to see where you want to go. For example, if your family always eats high fat snacks, you might try having healthier options instead, such as low-fat microwave popcorn, veggies and low fat dip, or a piece of fruit.

◆ **Use “We will do” goals instead of “We will be” goals.**

You may want to get fit, or eat more nutritiously, but what will get you there? Action-oriented goals will! For example, say “We will go for a walk three times a week” or “We will eat a high-fibre cereal every weekday instead of donuts for breakfast.”

◆ **Avoid the “should” and “have to” goals.**

These types of goals tend to make people feel guilty and deprived. Turn your thinking around to knowing that you have choices - you can have your cake and eat it too, along with more healthful choices.

◆ **Be flexible, and be ready to change your goals.**

If your long-term goal is to increase your vegetable and fruit intake to 6 servings a day, but you have failed at the short-term goal of eating fruit for dessert, maybe you could find recipes to make the fruit more appealing. Or try increasing your servings of vegetables and fruits other ways. Because goals are about changing *old* behaviours into *new* ones, goals will be challenging. If you have great difficulty in meeting one of your goals, you need to back up, redo your goal, and try again.

Realistic goal setting is helpful because you experience many small successes, and in turn, you gain a great belief in yourselves!



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(Example)



Our family's long-term goal(s):

We will follow Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating at least 6 days of the week by February 20.

Our family's short-term goal(s) for this week:

We will eat 6 servings from the Vegetables and Fruit food group each day. 1) We will do this by including fruit or juice with breakfast. 2)

We will have 2 servings of vegetables with our dinner. 3) We will take a piece of fruit for our snack at our afternoon break.

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Our family's long-term goal(s):

Our family's short-term goal(s) for this week:
