

## Making (and Keeping!) Healthy Resolutions

The WellPATH Employee Wellness Program welcomes you to 2019! We are excited to continue to provide you with health and wellness tips, programs, challenges, and activities throughout the New Year.

This month, the WellPATH Spotlight is focusing on New Year's Resolutions, including tips on how you can reach your 2019 goals. Review the spotlight to learn more about tips and strategies for keeping your New Year's Resolution and complete the monthly quiz for a chance to win a \$25 gift card!



### 5 Tips for Making Resolutions

Did you know that people who openly make resolutions are **10 times more likely** to attain their goals than people who do not? By making your resolutions realistic, there is a greater chance that you will keep them throughout the year, incorporating healthy behavior into your everyday life. The American Psychological Association offers these tips when thinking about a News Year's resolution:

## **1. Start Small**

Make resolutions that you think you can keep. If, for example, your aim is to exercise more frequently, schedule three or four days a week at the gym instead of seven. If you would like to eat healthier, try replacing dessert with something else you enjoy, like fruit or yogurt, instead of seeing your diet as a form of punishment.

## **2. Change One Behavior at a Time**

Unhealthy behaviors develop over the course of time. Thus, replacing unhealthy behaviors with healthy ones requires time. Don't get overwhelmed and think that you have to reassess everything in your life. Instead, work toward changing one thing at a time.

## **3. Talk About It**

Share your experiences with family and friends. Consider joining a support group to reach your goals, such as a workout class at your gym or a group of coworkers quitting smoking. Having someone to share your struggles and successes with makes your journey to a healthier lifestyle that much easier and less intimidating.

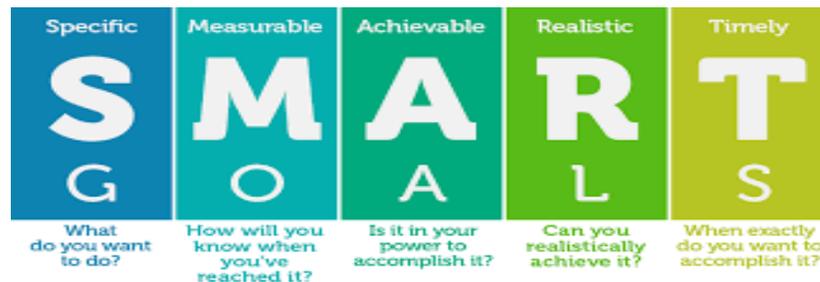
## **4. Don't Beat Yourself Up**

Perfection is unattainable. Remember that minor missteps when reaching your goals are completely normal and OK. Don't give up completely because you ate a brownie and broke your diet, or skipped the gym for a week because you were busy. Everyone has ups and downs; resolve to recover from your mistakes and get back on track.

## 5. Ask for Support

Accepting help from those who care about you and will listen strengthens your resilience and ability to manage stress caused by your resolution. If you feel overwhelmed or unable to meet your goals on your own, consider seeking professional help. Psychologists are uniquely trained to understand the connection between the mind and body. They can offer strategies as to how to adjust your goals so that they are attainable, as well as help you change unhealthy behaviors and address emotional issues.

## Make SMART Resolutions



The first step to New Year's resolution success: the resolutions, themselves! When it comes to planning your goals, keep in mind that they should be SMART - **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic** and **Timely**. The SMART goal setting tactic works especially well for weight loss goals. Run through the list below with your New Year's resolution to see if yours measures up!

### Setting Goals The SMART Way

**Specific:** A good question to ask yourself when creating a specific goal is, "is this goal determinable?" If there is a clear way to tell if the goal is being met, or not, then it's specific. Instead of saying "I will work out more," say, "To work out more, I will work out at least 3 times this week for at least 30 minutes each time." People are more likely to stick with goals that are

specific and focused, rather than goals that are lofty and general, because they are actionable--you either did it or you didn't do it. The specificity of the goal holds you more accountable because it doesn't allow for wiggle room, and accountability is key in achieving goals.

**Measurable:** Make your resolution quantitative. Instead of saying "I want to slim down," craft a goal that includes a unit that can be measured like, "I want to lose 10 pounds." Wanting to "slim down" is intangible, and subjective, which makes it harder to monitor and thus harder to stick with. When a goal includes a measurable unit, like X pounds, there is a tangibility to progress--benchmarks--that can be tracked and compared, and you can know for sure when you achieve it.

**Attainable:** Setting goals that are too far out of reach can discourage you and leave you feeling defeated. For example, if a walk down the street leaves you feeling winded, accomplishing your goal of climbing Mount Everest by next week is pretty unlikely. In that case, a better goal would be to take a brisk 20-minute walk 5 days a week--soon enough that walk down the block will be a walk in the park, and in more time and training for that Everest hike won't be such an uphill battle.

In terms of weight loss, setting a goal to lose 50 lbs when you don't have 50 lbs to lose would not only be physically impossible, but downright unhealthy. Creating a goal that is too easy will be defeating as well, as it won't challenge you and accomplishing it won't provide the same satisfaction as it would if you worked hard for it. Try to find that healthy medium between attainable and challenging when setting your health and weight loss goals.

**Realistic:** It is important to keep in mind that your life doesn't stop just because you've decided to pursue a new goal. You still have to go to

work, you still have to pay your bills, and you still only have 24 hours in your day. Therefore, when setting a goal, consider your current obligations and situations. Realistic goals are ones that can be achieved within those confines. What can you realistically commit to do?

To determine if a goal is realistic take barriers, like time and money, into consideration. It would be unrealistic to resolve to take a \$35 spin class five times a week when your weekly budget for workout classes is more around \$5. That's a financial barrier. If your job requires you to be there from 9am to 5pm, and the only spin classes are within those 8 hours, that's a time barrier. Always aim to set goals that fit into your life so that you can achieve them.

**Timely:** The best “specific” and “measurable” goals incorporate a time constraint (i.e. I will lose 10 lbs in 2 months). While you want to avoid setting a time limit that's so far in the future that you lose focus and/or forget about your goal, you also need to give yourself time to achieve your goal. In terms of weight loss, remember, it doesn't happen overnight; don't expect to lose weight quickly and keep it off. For sustainable weight loss, and to keep your morale high, aim to lose 1-2 lbs per week.



With the right planning and determination, you CAN keep your 2019 resolutions! Take time to enjoy the things you love, make your happiness and your health a priority, and have a wonderful 2019!