

Nutrition News

VOLUME 9, No. 1

A COMMUNITY NUTRITION PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER

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Setting Health Goals... and Keeping Them!

It's the beginning of a new year. Many of us think of this time of year as the perfect time to start anew and to make improvements in our health, finances, family and spiritual life. It's easy to set goals, but sometimes it's not so easy to keep them. A goal is what you intend to make happen. We've all set goals with good intentions and great enthusiasm. Soon the excitement wears off, and we find ourselves back into our old routines.

You've probably heard the old saying, "If you've got your health, then you've got everything." Setting goals to improve your health is one of the most important things you can do for yourself and the ones you love. Follow these tips, and you will be able to set goals that will make 2010 your healthiest year yet!

Have a Clear Picture of your Goal

Begin by setting no more than one or two goals a year. Setting too many goals can be overwhelming and can sabotage your success. Take a moment to think about your goals and what's important to you. Set goals that you are ready to work toward. If your spouse wants you to lose weight and you are not ready to commit to a diet and exercise plan, then perhaps this is not the time to start a weight-loss program.

Be sure your goals are clear and specific. It's difficult to achieve a goal that is vague or cloudy. The more specific you are in knowing what you want to achieve, the more successful you will be in reaching your goal. Rather than saying that you want to lose weight, say how many pounds you'd like to lose. Then define how

you will lose weight. Are you going to cut calories? Are you going to start an exercise routine? How often will you exercise? Set a date for when you want to start and when you want to reach your goal. Give yourself a deadline to work toward.

An example of a goal that is not specific: "This year, I want to get healthier by losing weight and exercising."

An example of a clear and specific goal: "Starting January 1, 2010, I want to lose 25 pounds by losing 1-2 pounds per week. I plan to

- Reduce the amount of food that I eat at each meal and snack.
- Eat three servings of fruits and vegetables each day until I reach a goal of 5 servings a day.

I also plan to begin walking 10 minutes per day 3 days a week until I reach a goal of 30 minutes 5 days per week. I plan to reach my goals by June 1, 2010."

*It's important
not to undermine
yourself with goals that
are impossible to reach. On
the other hand, you don't
want to set goals that
don't challenge you to
make changes.*

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You Gotta Have a Plan

Start off slowly by setting small goals. This gives you a sense of accomplishment along the way. If you plan to lose weight, you may start by planning your meals for the week and shopping from a grocery list to be sure you include all the fruits and vegetables you will need to stay on track. You may vow to prepare more of your meals at home and only eat out once a week instead of five times a week. This may not only help shrink your waistline but can help tighten your belt on your budget, too!

Make your goals into routines. If you plan to start walking 3 days per week, schedule time in your morning or at lunch to get in your exercise. Be sure to have your walking shoes and comfortable clothes ready to go.

Work with your schedule and level of energy. If you have to pick up the kids from school, prepare dinner and help with homework in the afternoons, then you may be more successful if you get up a few minutes earlier in the morning to get in your walking when you are rested and refreshed.

Write Down your Goals

Not only is it important to have a clear picture of your goals, it's important to write them down. Seeing them on paper helps you focus on what you want to achieve. Read your goals daily, maybe even several times a day, so you can stay enthusiastic.

It's also helpful to tell your family and friends what goals you are trying to reach. Ask them for their help and support. Telling others also will help you stay on track.

Reward Yourself along the Way

As you accomplish your goals, reward yourself for a job well done. If your goal is to lose weight, however, do not reward yourself with food, things or activities that could cause a setback in your progress. A better reward would be to buy a new pair of walking shoes or workout clothes rather than to treat yourself to ice cream or an extra half hour of T.V.

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January 2010

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

This material was partially funded by USDA's Food Stamp program. The Food Stamp program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income.

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