

Week Seven *on The PATH*

Healthy Behavior Changes and Goal Setting

Everyone has heard it a million times — set realistic goals to make your healthy habits permanent. But actually doing it is the hard part. Like it or not, we are creatures of habit, and changing from bad habits to good habits takes work. But it can be done! This week we will be going over the structure you need to cement your new behaviors for lifelong health.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

- Break the chain of bad habits
- Set realistic goals

WHAT TO KNOW THIS WEEK

- Ways to set and meet goals to produce long-term success
- Importance of overcoming barriers to meeting goals
- What is a realistic goal?

RESOURCES

HOMEWORK

- Document behaviors that need to be changed
- Figure out the barriers and how to overcome them
- Write 2 measurable, flexible, and realistic goals
- Set up a reward system

JOURNALING

- Every small step counts

Behavior Chains are:

- A series of specific behaviors that could result in an action that you do not want to happen.
- A pattern that leads to relapse or a problem behavior.
- Connected behaviors that could predict the end action of the problem behavior.
- A link of emotional and respondent behaviors that lead to the problem behavior.

Today we are going to focus on breaking the chain and work on positive goal setting that will continue to move us forward on the lifestyle behaviors of The PATH.

To set a **realistic goal** you want to make sure that the goal is:

- Measurable
 - Over a specific time period
 - How often
 - How much
- Flexible
 - Room for slight changes just to fit into our everyday changing lives.
 - Specific but not so specific that we are not able to stick with it.
- Realistic
 - Can be attained

Example of a poorly written goal: I will bring my lunch to work more often.

Example of a well written goal: Starting Monday April 20, 2004 I will start bring my lunch to work at least three times per week.

As you can see the second goal is measurable—at least 3 times per week

It is also flexible—it does not specify what days of the week, which allows for flexibility

It is also realistic—three days is possible to attain

It is always good to make a list of barriers and how you could overcome these barriers.

For example a barrier might be that the person feels rushed in the morning and does not have time to make their lunch. What could they do to overcome this barrier?

Make their lunch the night before

Plan to make a variety of things on Sunday night that they could take for the week

Plan menu so they buy the necessary foods when they go to the grocery store

Reward

Reward System

Finally, a **reward system** should be set up. Rewards should be something that could also benefit a person's overall well being, and that may help alleviate and manage stress. For example if this person brought their lunch 6 times in a two week period. They could reward themselves with a new book or a new music CD. Both reading and listening to music is good for our overall well-being. The person should make sure they are rewarding themselves because positive reinforcement at the beginning of behavior change is key. But — they should only reward themselves if the goal was met in the way they wanted it to be met.

After a period of time of making a concentrated effort to set and meet realistic goals, they become part of your daily life. After this happens it may be time to set other goals.

Homework

- Think of a behavior that you would like to change.
First write down the behavior
Next, list at least 5 actions or cues that lead up to the unwanted behavior
Next, beside each of the actions or cues, list something that you could do instead to break the chain as soon as possible
- Set two realistic goals that could help you change the unwanted behavior.
Make sure the goal you write is measurable so you can assess your progress.
List barriers that could affect the achievement of the goal and what you could do to overcome the barriers
Make sure to have a sensible reward set up when the goal is met
It has also been shown that if you tell people what you are doing you feel accountable. You could try telling a close friend or family member about the goals you have set. Ask them for their support and have them ask you how things are going in terms of working on your goals.
- Assess how you are doing at meeting your goals. Make necessary changes if you think the goal you set was a bit unrealistic.
- Assess your behavior chains. Are you doing well at breaking the chain as soon as possible?
- And remember when you meet a goal and it becomes part of your lifestyle examine another area where you could set a goal. Go through the same technique and so on and so forth. You can do it!

Journal

Beginning of the week

- Why do you do the things you do?
- What actions are you noticing that lead to certain behaviors?
- What are some things you can do throughout your day to meet your goals with success?
- What types of goals have you set in the past and why have you not had success with meeting them?
- What is going to be different this time and why do you think you will have success in meeting your goals?
- Assess behaviors that you would like to change and figure out what cues lead up to the behavior.
- Set 2 measurable, flexible, and realistic goals.

End of the week

- Assess how you are doing on meeting your goals? Is there something you need to change about it? Were the goals realistic and measurable?
- Keep working towards meeting your goals. When you meet these goals and they become a part of your lifestyle set two new ones. You can do it!