

# Self-Care Strategies: Goal Setting

When you live with a long-term health problem you may begin to feel like you are losing control and not living the life you pictured. Physical limitations may begin to get in the way of doing the things you enjoy. And that can have a negative effect on you emotionally.

When you are depressed, angry or frustrated you may find it difficult to manage the physical challenges of your condition and end up not doing the things that help you day to day. This can be a cycle that is hard to break.

Instead, take control. Sometimes gaining control over even a small part of your condition can help you break the cycle and feel confident enough to tackle some of the bigger issues.

One way to begin to take control is by Goal Setting. If you set a specific goal and focus on the steps you need to get you there, you can begin to take control of your condition, and your overall health for the future.

Take some time to think about what area of your life you would like to focus on first. Decide what is getting in the way of living the life you picture.

Once you decide on the area you want to work on, make a list of goals you can set to help you be successful. Most of the time there is more than one option to achieve the results you want. Take some time to think of the ways you can get there, and then pick one that is most realistic for you.

For example, if you are trying to remember to take your medications every day you can get a pill organizer, set an alert on your phone, post a note on your refrigerator or ask a family member to help you remember. Choose one method that you think will work best for you and try it.

You may want to write down your goal. Then give yourself a timeframe to take action. For example, I will buy a pill organizer this week. I will walk outside once this week. I will check my blood sugar every day this week.

At the end of the week, check your progress. With specific goals to take action, you can easily see whether you were successful or whether you need more time to reach your goal.

If you had trouble reaching your goal, take a few minutes to think of the obstacles that got in your way and ways around them in the future. This is your plan and it can always be changed. The important thing is that you continue to set goals and take steps toward reaching them for your health.

If you did reach your goal, reward yourself for a job well done. Rewards don't have to be big, expensive or fattening. Just pick a reward that makes you happy. Then move on to setting another goal and working to reach it.

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You do not have to do this alone. Talk to your healthcare team about the goals you are trying to set. Your team may be able to give you some good ideas about how to reach your goals and how to work to overcome any obstacles that get in your way. Use their knowledge to help you along your path to positive self-management.

Living with a long-term health condition can be frustrating and you may feel like you are no longer in control. But you can take action to change that. Begin to set goals and take the steps you need to reach them.

To be successful when setting goals remember to:

- Choose one area of your life that you want to work on first.
- Set one goal that will help improve your health in that area.
- Make a list of the different actions you can take to reach that goal.
- Write a contract with yourself.
- Set a date to take action.
- Review your progress.
- Make changes to your plan if necessary.
- Set another goal and keep going.

Every goal you reach will get you one step closer to taking control of your health condition and living the life you want to live for the long-term.