

Do you want to go from self-sabotage to success?

It's all about making your health plan attainable and sustainable!

3 Keys to creating Small, Smart & Strategic Health Goals

will help you to create an attainable and sustainable health action plan that will lead to success!

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We've all been there! We have a "Come to Jesus" moment that leaves us highly motivated to make some big changes in our health! That motivation is great, but it often leads to methods that result in self-sabotage rather than success.

To implement a health action plan requires a commitment. And Jesus encourages us to carefully consider our commitments to make sure that we can really follow-through on our intentions.

*Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, "This person began to build and wasn't able to finish."
(Luke 4:28-29, NIV)*

When it comes to health action plans, follow-through involves more than motivation. Follow-through also involves making health action plans that are *both* attainable in the present and sustainable in the future by creating health goals that are **small, smart, and strategic**.

Here are a series of questions to help you assess if your health action plan is attainable and sustainable:

A successful health action plan contains goals that are SMALL.

As much as we all like to watch and read about big health makeovers, that approach simply does not work for most of us. For a health action plan to be *both* attainable and sustainable, it has to contain health goals that are small. The best way to assess this is to simply ask ourselves this question:

Is my health goal based on a behavior or an outcome? *Losing 50 pounds is not a behavior, it is an outcome. Fitting into a smaller pants size is not a behavior, it is an outcome. Having an anxiety-free day is not a behavior, it is an outcome.*

In contrast to outcome goals, behavioral goals are small and specific, such as:

- *"I will use a salad plate when I eat my dinner 5 days this week to check portion sizes."*
- *"I will go to my group exercise class 3 days this week."*
- *"I will take 20 minutes for prayer and scripture meditation every morning before my workday begins."*

What about you? Is your latest health improvement goal based on a behavior or an outcome?

A successful health action plan contains goals that are SMART.

As much as we would like to think that our excessive exposure to the media and the internet make us more knowledgeable about health issues, that simply is not the case. In fact, many times they leave us feeling more confused than anything else! For a health action plan to be *both* attainable and sustainable, it has to be based on evidence and common sense. The best way to assess this is to simply ask ourselves this question:

Have I done my homework? *Reading one book or website is not doing our homework. Assuming that celebrity means credibility is not doing our homework. Acting upon a health-related media soundbite is not doing our homework.*

In contrast to reacting to health information, get smart and respond by:

- *Researching opposing viewpoints or approaches to your health concerns.*
- *Researching the website author – is he/she an expert or and expert with an agenda?*
- *Comparing recommendations with biblical principles for healthy living revealed in scripture.*

What about you? Have you done your homework before starting in on a new health goal?

A successful health action plan contains goals that are STRATEGIC.

As much as we might like to structure our health goals around what is popular, what feels good at the moment, what worked for us in the past or what worked for our best friend, this approach rarely leads to long-term success. For a health action plan to be *both* attainable and sustainable, it has to contain health goals that are strategic. The best way to assess this is to simply ask ourselves this question:

Are my health goals engaging and efficient? *An exercise plan based on an activity that we don't enjoy is not engaging. An eating plan based on nutrition facts only is not engaging. A complicated eating or exercise plan is not efficient.*

In contrast to what seems right or is popular at the moment, let's focus on health goals that speak to our interests and preferences and that consider our other roles and responsibilities, such as:

- *Having fruit with meals to increase daily fiber intake **and** decrease daily caloric intake **and** increase intake of cancer-fighting compounds **and** enjoy a food with natural sweetness **and** leave a legacy of healthy eating habits for our children.*
- *Signing up for a group exercise class because we value good music **and** fun dance moves **and** health-enhancing social connections **and** a way to expel the accumulated tension from the workday.*
- *Putting a bike rack on our car so we can transport the bikes to get some exercise **and** spend time with our kids **and** enjoy some adventures in the great outdoors.*

What about you? Have you taken the time to strategize so that your health goals are personally engaging and efficient?

Please contact Ginger Hill at ghill@goodhealthforgoodworks.org with questions or if you need assistance in setting small, smart & strategic health goals.