



## Goal Setting

Having a clear picture in mind of what you want to accomplish is essential for success. Most of us can picture ourselves at a lower weight, full of energy, walking up three flights of stairs without being winded, no longer a slave to food and having the stamina to pursue new challenges. Utilizing bariatric surgery as a tool to reach these goals is a very important first step. As your weight decreases, you are inspired by your success. As you enjoy this life-changing weight loss, take the time to formalize your health and fitness goals. There is no better time to focus your efforts on improving your health and fitness level.

### Step 1. Goal Setting

Take time to clarify *why* you want the goal, what you may have to give up in the process, and whether the tradeoff is something that you are truly up to at this point in time. Health goals are often more effective if they are based upon values such as eating healthfully to set an example for children or getting in shape to keep up with grandchildren. Be sure to use a positive statement for each goal.

Author Paul J. Meyers created the acronym SMART to remind us that goals should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Tangible. Setting specific goals allows you to know exactly when you have achieved a goal, and you can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it. Use times, amounts, dates, frequency and other measurable components of your goals so that you can measure and track your success. It is crucial to set goals that you believe are attainable. Otherwise you won't even try. A goal is realistic if you stand reasonably good odds of accomplishing it, given enough time and effort. A tangible goal is something that you can see, something that is real.

You may want to set at least one easy goal (usually short term) and at least one challenging goal (usually long term). You could have several of each but you should limit the number of challenging goals at any one time to avoid becoming overwhelmed or frustrated. Easy goals build good habits and reward you with quick gratification. The challenging goals force you to make more major adjustments in your lifestyle. A mix of the two is ideal.

### Step 2. Make Your Goals Official

It takes a personal commitment, a decision, to set goals. Write them down, post them in a conspicuous place, and review them often. This crystallizes your objectives and gives them more power. Consider sharing your goals with one or more people whom you trust.

### Step 3. Create a Plan

People who set goals often fail because they never make a plan. You know what they say, "Failing to prepare is preparing to fail." Create a step-by-step plan of attack. A good plan is one that when followed, offers a reasonably high probability of success, given sufficient time. Almost any goal, no matter how difficult, can be made easier by breaking

it down into several smaller goals or steps. The completion of these small steps builds confidence, momentum, and a track record of performance. When you create a plan, ask yourself, "Will completing these steps lead to completion of the goal?" If not, then modify the steps until a viable plan exists.

#### **Step 4. Move to Action**

Once you have a plan, the biggest challenge is to get started and stick with it. I think Nike has it right with their "Just Do It" motto. You have overall goals broken down into smaller steps with a step-by-step plan in place. Now all you need to do is begin work. It's easy to get distracted by the activities of daily life—but don't. Make these goals a priority. Keep a log to monitor your progress and stay on track. If you miss a scheduled day of exercise, don't give up...just pick up where you left off. Consistency is the key to success.

#### **Step 5. Stay Flexible**

Life isn't always predictable, so plan for contingencies. For example if your plan calls for walking outside and there is a thunderstorm during your scheduled activity time, have a back-up plan in place. Constantly evaluate your overall progress and make adjustments to your goals and plans to improve your approach. You may want to think of your goals as a point on the horizon that you are walking toward. The success comes not all at once when you reach it, but rather, in tiny amounts with each and every step taken in that direction.

When you have achieved a goal, take the time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so. Observe the progress you have made toward other goals. Be sure to reward yourself appropriately when you reach each goal.