

# 17

## Adopting Healthy Habits



In this chapter you will learn about:

- ◆ Setting SMART goals.
- ◆ Reaching goals.
- ◆ Evaluating progress.
- ◆ Staying motivated and overcoming setbacks.

**Forming** habits to enhance physical performance and for achieving a healthier lifestyle is both personally and professionally rewarding. Using the information provided in the preceding chapters, you can set goals, develop healthy habits and achieve your objectives. For example, if your objective is to improve cardiovascular fitness, use the information provided in [Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 11](#) to design your a plan of action. Remember, effective programs for enhancing physical performance and overall health include both sound nutrition practices and appropriate physical training.

The process of developing and maintaining healthy habits can be challenging. It is a gradual process which requires commitment, effort and perseverance. Ultimately, the payoff will be in the form of enhanced job-related physical performance, being in great physical shape, and lowering your risk for developing chronic health problems as you get older. Everyone ages: steps you take now will last a lifetime!

## Setting “SMART” Goals

As you go through the process of changing and adopting healthy habits, you are actively taking charge of your health. Begin by setting **Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic and Timed** (SMART) goals to meet your fitness and health-related objectives. A SMART goal should be:

- ◆ **Specific** - The more specific the goal, the easier it is to plan your routines to reach the goal. If you have a general goal, pick a specific area to focus on. For example, define “I want to increase my running distance” to “I will increase my running distance by one mile.” Another example, restate “I want to increase my dietary fiber intake” as “I will add one additional serving each of fruits and vegetables to my daily diet”.
- ◆ **Measurable** - Your specific goal should be easy for you to measure so you can chart your progress. Taking the running example above, you can easily measure the distance you run to determine if you are meeting your goal. As for the fiber example, you can record your fruit and vegetable intake (see [Appendix A](#)).
- ◆ **Action-oriented** - When defining a specific goal state exactly what actions you must do to achieve the goal. This becomes your plan to reach your goals. For example, “I will increase my run by a quarter mile every two weeks until I am able to run an additional mile.”
- ◆ **Realistic** - Be realistic in your expectations of yourself and what you expect to gain. Taking large or long-term goals and breaking them into smaller, more manageable goals to keep you motivated and focused on your actions. For example, train for and run a 5k race, then build up to a 10k race.
- ◆ **Timed** - Time lines provide direction in planning short-term goals and actions to reach long-term goals and objectives. Using the running example above: two weeks is the deadline for increasing run distance by a quarter mile, and two months is the long-term deadline for increasing distance by one mile.

[Table 17-1](#) lists a number of general nutrition and fitness-related goals to assist you in identifying your own goals and in designing and setting “SMART” goals as described above.



**Table 17-1. Some General Nutrition and Fitness-Related Goals**

| General Nutrition-Related Goals   | General Fitness-Related Goals   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read food labels when buying foods.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Health benefits (lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and lower stress). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat foods according to their serving sizes.                | <input type="checkbox"/> Improve/maintain heart and lung (cardiovascular) fitness.                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. | <input type="checkbox"/> Improve/maintain muscular strength.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Include foods that are good sources of calcium.            | <input type="checkbox"/> Improve performance of job-related physically-demanding tasks.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Follow the U.S. Dietary Guidelines.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain healthy body weight and body fat.                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drink plenty of fluids to maintain fluid balance.          | <input type="checkbox"/> Improve/maintain flexibility.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat more dietary fiber.                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Have strong bones.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce saturated fat and cholesterol intakes.              | <input type="checkbox"/> Improve physical appearance.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____   |

## Reaching Goals

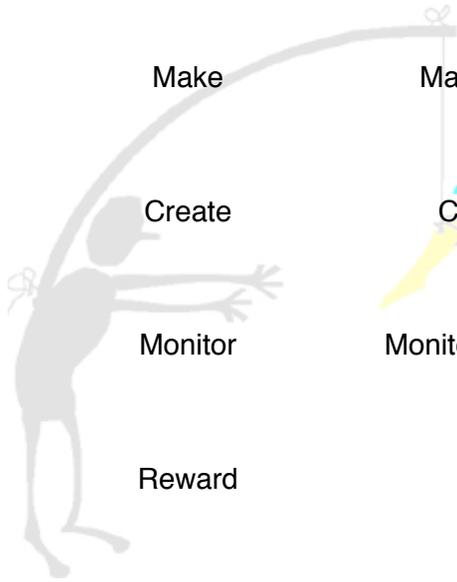
The more specific and realistic your goals, the easier it will be to develop and follow action plans to meet these goals. More than likely, unforeseen events will lead to altered plans; expect this and keep your ultimate goals in mind when replanning. Next incorporate your plan into your daily routines. At first you will have to consciously make efforts to follow your plans, but, after continuous practice, these plans will become your new habit. The following points and the steps and actions listed in [Table 17-2](#) will help you reach your goals:

- ◆ Start simple: pick a goal that you feel will be easy to achieve.

- ◆ Work toward one goal at a time.
- ◆ If you notice that you are having difficulty achieving a goal, revise your plan and alter your strategy.

**Table 17-2. Steps and Actions To Take To Reach Your SMART Goals**

| STEPS   | ACTIONS  |
|---------|--|
| Develop | Develop an support system of friends, family and/or coworkers who will encourage you.                      |
| Make    | Make change a priority; Make time; Remember you control your off-duty schedule.                            |
| Create  | Create a plan of action -- one that works for you, motivates you and fits in your schedule.                |
| Monitor | Monitor your progress -- use the tracking charts provided in Appendixes A and B.                           |
| Reward  | Reward yourself when you meet a goal.  |
| Use     | Use long-term vision. Remember healthy habit will greatly enhance the quality of your life in later years. |



Adapted from National Cancer Institute and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://5aday.nci.nih.gov/>).

## Maintaining Healthy Habits

Once your “new” habit becomes a part of your routine and is performed without forethought or effort, you are maintaining, rather than adopting, this habit. Maintaining healthy habits during interruptions in your regular routine (such as vacations or illness) can create challenges of its own. So how can you maintain



your routine when faced with setbacks?

- ◆ Anticipate and try to avoid setbacks or upsets to your routine.
- ◆ Plan in advance how you will handle interruptions (e.g.vacation) to your schedule.
- ◆ Motivate yourself to restart your routine when things “return to normal”. For example, give your workout buddy \$20 before you go on vacation to keep on your behalf until you restart your exercise routine.
- ◆ Reward yourself once you have achieved maintenance for your goal. The reward should be appropriate for the goal attained (preferably non-food). For example: put \$1 in a piggy bank for every workout you complete for a month and use it to buy yourself new exercise gear or a ticket to your favorite sporting event.
- ◆ Enhanced fitness builds self-confidence which is a powerful motivator!

Ultimately, your perceptions of the health and fitness benefits associated with healthy eating practices and regular exercise are important for maintaining healthy lifestyle behaviors. We hope that the information provided in this guide motivates you to personally follow healthy nutrition and physical fitness practices and to educate fellow navy personnel to do the same.