

Setting Goals and Staying Motivated

My son goes from being really positive about making changes to really discouraged. How can I help him stay focused?

PARENTS ASK:

Your child has some big goals.

- ▶ The goal of being healthy.
- ▶ The goal of managing diabetes.
- ▶ The goal of eating fewer RED foods.
- ▶ The goal of increasing GREEN activity.

These are big and important goals. It will take some time to reach them. It's not surprising that your child might get discouraged when things don't change fast enough. Children often want immediate results.

When goals are big and far off, it's harder to keep trying. It's also harder to know exactly what you should be doing now.

That's where smaller goals, step-by-step goals come in. You need to show your child how to set small goals. He can take one step at a time and still get where he needs to go.

It sounds good. But how can I teach my child to take it one step at a time?

PARENTS ASK:

There's a trick to it. Your son needs to put his goals on a schedule.

Here's how it works. He doesn't try to meet a big goal all at once. Instead, he plans a way to meet it over a period of weeks. Or even months. First, help him make a list of small steps to take along the way. Then put these steps on a schedule.

For example, if your son is eating an average of 18 RED foods a day, his final goal might be to eat only 3 RED foods a day. It's not a good idea to try

KEY GOALS

Staying motivated will help you meet your 4 key goals:

- ⊙ Limit RED foods
- ⊙ Increase GREEN activity
- ⊙ Hold Family Meetings
- ⊙ Keep Track of Weight

to cut out 15 RED foods all at once. That would be too hard to do. Instead, you help him make a plan to cut down to 8 RED foods a day over six weeks. To do this, he can set a goal for each week. Each week he sets a goal of fewer RED foods. That's doing it step by step.

- ▶ Week #0: His starting point is an average of 18 RED foods a day.
- ▶ Week #1: Cut down to 16 RED foods a day.
- ▶ Week #2: Cut down to 14 RED foods a day.
- ▶ Week #3: Cut down to 12 RED foods a day.
- ▶ Week #4: Cut down to 10 RED foods a day.

Breaking a big goal into smaller goals is the first step. Then you make a schedule for meeting these smaller goals.

Here's what you'll learn about in this module:

- ▶ Breaking big goals into smaller goals
- ▶ Scheduling small steps to meet these goals
- ▶ Making a realistic plan to meet these goals



Making small changes will help your child reach a big goal.

After 4 weeks your son is eating 10 RED foods a day! That's a big change from 18. He is eating 8 fewer RED foods a day than when he started. And he isn't done yet. He's made this progress because he took it one step at a time. It worked because you helped him go step-by-step. It worked because he didn't try to do it all at once.

What about the 5th week? Your son has been cutting out 2 more RED foods every week. Should he continue that pace? Should he set a goal of 8 RED foods? Probably not. It will be harder to cut out 2 more RED foods a day now than when he started. He needs a smaller goal

he can reach. Encourage him to set a goal of cutting back only 1 RED food a day during that week. So his next goal would be 9 RED foods.

- ▶ Week #5: Cut down to 9 RED foods a day.

He should do the same thing for the 6th week. Cutting back by 1 RED food. That will put him at his goal of 8 RED foods a day.

- ▶ Week #6: Cut down to 8 RED foods a day.

Perhaps your child should stay at this level for a week or two. That way he will feel more confident when he moves on to another goal.

Encourage your son to keep track of his progress. That's the only way to see how well he is

doing. Keeping a chart is one of the best ways of keeping track of progress. See the sample chart in the Help Sheet for this module.

PARENTS ASK:

What should I say if my daughter meets her small goal on only some of the days of the week? Should she go on to the next small goal?

No. She shouldn't go on to the next step if she hasn't met her goal. For example, let's say she is eating an average of 7 RED foods a day. She has a goal of cutting down to 5 a day. Say she met this goal on only 3 of the 7 days for the week. On the other days she ate more than 5 RED foods. If that's the case, she should stick with the same

Tips for reaching a goal

Go over these tips with your child:

- ▶ Find out where you stand now. Use your Lifestyle Log to find your starting point. Write it down.
- ▶ Put small goals on the calendar.
- ▶ Keep your goals clear and simple. That way you know what you want to do.
- ▶ Make sure each goal is realistic. If the goal isn't doable, you'll just get discouraged.
- ▶ Keep track of your progress. Making a chart is a great way to keep a record.
- ▶ Stick with a goal until you reach it, even if it takes longer than you planned. Don't give up on your goal. Just push back your schedule.
- ▶ Make a plan to help you reach every goal. If your goal isn't linked to a plan, it's not a goal. It's just a good idea.
- ▶ Praise and reward yourself each time you meet a goal. Food should never be a reward.



goal for another week. Help her do some problem-solving so you can figure out how to meet her goal.

- ▶ Remind your child that sometimes going slowly is the best way to go the distance.

It's better to take it one step at a time than to race ahead when you have not completed each goal. It's always better to know what you are really doing than to pretend you are doing better than you are. Facing the facts is the first step in making changes.

Alicia wanted to do more than 200 minutes of physical activity a week. She wanted to get to 300 minutes, the gold medal goal. She knew she would have to average 45 minutes of physical activity a day to do that.

But on some days she didn't even get in 30 minutes of physical activity. That put her below her first goal of 200 minutes a week. She did an activity on the Help Sheet. This made some things clear to her. It made it clear that she really wanted to meet her goals. It also made it clear that she didn't think she could.

She talked to her mother. Her mother reminded Alicia about going after goals one step at a time. She told her about setting small goals. She told her about making a schedule. She also reminded her to be realistic. There would be some days when she could not get in 30 minutes of physical activity. Other days she could do more.

"I know," said Alicia. "But I'm not sure I can do it. It's fall now. The days are shorter. It's harder to do things when it gets dark so early. Besides, school and my friends keep me really busy."

"All this is true," her mother said. "But it doesn't mean you can't do it. I'll help you make a plan. First, let's plan how you can get your 200 minutes in. Then we'll make a plan so you can get up to 300 minutes over the next few months."

"I'd like to do it sooner than that," Alicia said.

"Sure you would. Maybe you can. But first let's take a look at your schedule for the next few weeks. Let's see how you can get your 200 minutes in. Then we'll figure out how to stretch from 30 minutes a day to 35. Then to 40. Then to 45," her mother said.

They did this together. Alicia's mother had some good ideas. She pointed out how Alicia could get in more physical activity on the weekends. She offered to walk with her after dark on two days when she was able to. That way it would be safe. She also suggested that Alicia do aerobics at home. She could ask her PAL for a tape.

Alicia got really excited. She saw herself getting to 200 right away. She felt sure she could even get to 300 soon. She did the activity on the Help Sheet again. Before she had circled a "3" for confidence. This time she circled an "8." She felt sure she could make her goal.

It worked. For two weeks in a row, Alicia met her goal of 200 minutes. Then she and her mother set some new goals. These were step-by-step goals, small goals on the way to 300.

(Continued on next page)

What made Alicia's plan work so well?

How could you help your child make a schedule to reach a big goal?

(Continued from previous page)

- ▶ Week #0.....**180** Alicia's starting point.
- ▶ Weeks #1 & 2.**200!** Alicia meets her **1st big goal!**
- ▶ Weeks #3 & 4.**225** One more step...
- ▶ Weeks #5 & 6.**250** and another...
- ▶ Weeks #7 & 8.**275** and another.
- ▶ Week# 9.**300!** Alicia meets her **2nd big goal!**

Alicia met all her goals. They were easier to meet because she had a plan. They were also easier because each one was just a little step forward. In fact, on some weeks Alicia went beyond her goals.

Alicia thanked her mother. She knew it would have been much harder to do without support.

"It's not magic," her mother said. "Part of it's the hard work you are doing. Part of it's because you made a realistic plan. Part of it's because you scheduled your goals. You can do the same thing with a lot of other goals, too," her mother said.

If your child sticks with a small goal for another week or two until he meets it, he stands a better chance of meeting his big, long-term goal. If he races ahead trying to meet the next small goal on his schedule before he has met the one before it, he may get discouraged and feel like quitting. That sure wouldn't help.

- ▶ Encourage your child to think about his reasons for changing.

Tell him to look at why this goal is important. Tell him to think about how this would help him. Ask him how confident he is about reaching his goal. Then make a plan to help him move forward. It doesn't need to be moving forward with giant steps. It just needs to be moving forward. The Help Sheet gives you a good way to do this.

How to help yourself stay motivated

- ▶ Set small goals.
- ▶ Schedule your goals.
- ▶ Make a plan to meet them.
- ▶ Use any mistakes to improve your next plan.

Tips for making a plan that works

Go over these tips with your child:

- ▶ Keep your plan *simple and clear*.
It should say:
What you want to do.
Where you will do it.
How you will do it.
When you will do it.
Who will do it with you.
Why you want to do it.
- ▶ Keep your plan *realistic*.
It must be doable.

How to help your child stay motivated

- ▶ Encourage your child to set small goals.
- ▶ Help your child make a schedule for reaching these goals.
- ▶ Help your child make a realistic plan to meet the scheduled goals.
- ▶ Talk about how the plans work at Family Meetings.

Every goal needs a plan. Otherwise it's not a goal. It's just a good idea.

Setting Goals and Staying Motivated

Explore Your Child's Goals

Your child has a chart in his Help Sheet. Your child may need your help using the chart. The idea of breaking a big goal into smaller goals may be something your child has not had much practice with. That's why he may need your help. The examples you read about in the module can be a good guide.

A good way to help is to ask questions. Try to make sure that each weekly goal seems realistic. Make sure that the goals are small enough. Then make sure that your child has a plan to meet each goal.

For example, if your child has a goal of cutting down on RED foods, ask about it. *What RED foods will he cut out? When does he usually eat those RED foods? How will he go about it? Where will he be? Who can give him support for his plan?* Questions like these will help your child think about the plan. They will help him be more practical. They will help him be realistic.

Your child also has an activity that will help her see how determined she is to meet a goal. Go over it with her. Ask her to explain her answers. Talking about this will help her see more clearly what she can do to meet her goal. It will help her want to do it more. Be sure to ask her how you can help.

Schedule Your Child's Goals

List the food and eating goals your child is working on right now. Which goals have a schedule and a plan? Is there something you need to do to help your child move forward? What?

Food/Eating Goals	Scheduled?	Plan to meet the schedule?	How can I help?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Continued on next page.

Schedule Your Child's Goals (continued)

List the physical activity goals your child is working on right now. Which goals have a schedule and a plan? Is there something you need to do to help your child move forward? What?

Physical Activity Goals	Scheduled?	Plan to meet the schedule?	How can I help?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Strengthen Your Desire To Meet Your Goals

Pick a goal that you want to work on. Be specific. Think about what you want to do. Then, think about why you want to do it and answer the questions about this goal.

My Goal:

My desire to meet my goal: (0 = not at all, 10 = very much)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What makes me so interested in this goal?

What would it take to make me more likely to really try?

How will meeting this goal help me meet other goals?

How confident am I that I can meet my goal: (0 = not at all, 10 = very much)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What makes me this confident I can meet this goal?

What would it take to make me more confident I can meet this goal?

What can I do to meet this goal now?

Setting Goals and Staying Motivated

Schedule Your Goals

Use the form below to schedule your goals. Break your big goal into smaller goals. Schedule them over the coming weeks. Use the "Progress" column to keep track of how well you met your goal. Use your Lifestyle Log to keep track of your progress each day. This form will help you keep track of the big picture.

Big Goal:

Week	Small Goals	Progress
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

In the space below, write down how you will meet your goals. Make your plan clear. Make it specific. Make sure it is realistic enough for you to do.

My Plan:

Setting Goals and Staying Motivated

Every goal needs a plan.

- ▶ If your goal isn't linked to a plan, it's just a good idea.

Every plan needs a schedule.

- ▶ If a plan isn't linked to a schedule, it's just wishful thinking.

Tips for reaching a goal

Go over these tips with your child:

- ▶ Use your Lifestyle Log to see how many RED foods you eat or how many minutes of physical activity you get each day.
- ▶ Put small, one-step-at-a-time goals on the calendar.
- ▶ Keep your goals clear and simple.
- ▶ Make sure each goal is realistic. If a goal isn't doable, you'll get discouraged.
- ▶ Keep track of your progress. Making a chart is a great help.
- ▶ Stick with a goal until you reach it, even if it takes longer than you planned.
- ▶ Make a plan to help you reach every goal.
- ▶ Praise and reward yourself each time you meet a goal. But remember, do not choose a reward that involves food.

Should my child go on to the next small goal if she meets a small goal on only some of the days of the week?

- ▶ No. Not if she hasn't come very close to meeting her goal most of the time.
- ▶ Tell her to stick with the same small goal for another week.
- ▶ Problem-solve with her to figure out how to meet her goal.

Tips for making a plan that works

Go over these tips with your child:

- ▶ Keep your plan *simple* and *clear*. It should say:

<i>What</i> you want to do.	<i>Where</i> you will do it.
<i>How</i> you will do it.	<i>When</i> you want to do it.
<i>Who</i> you will do it with.	<i>Why</i> you want to do it.
- ▶ Keep your plan *realistic*. It must be doable.

