



Set realistic goals. Having goals you can reach gives you confidence and motivation to set more goals. Focus on your health and create a sensible eating plan instead of thinking about reaching a certain weight. For example, try to eat five servings of fruit and vegetables daily, or work out at least three times per week. Set one or two small goals each week that you can easily fit into your current lifestyle. Revisit your goals on a weekly basis and continue to set new goals — remember that you're a work in progress!

Be patient. Go slow — lasting changes don't happen overnight. When habits are formed slowly, they usually last. Small changes add up to big results. You may want quick results and think about making drastic changes such as following a very low-calorie diet. While these weight-loss tactics often produce quick results, you may feel deprived and hungry. This can lead to gaining back the weight you lost.

Plan for setbacks and prepare for temptations. Indulging once in a while is OK, and it's not considered a failure or a reason to give up. It's acceptable to "slip up" and you have a chance to get back on track the next day or even at the next meal.

Don't do it alone! Having a support system is essential for long-term success. Find a friend, co-worker or family member that has similar goals and work together to achieve them. Try joining an exercise group or signing up for a class for extra encouragement.

Focus on the positive. If a few weeks go by without losing weight, don't give up! Make a list of all the positive changes that you've already made. Think of all the healthy habits you've started and keep going!

Reward yourself. Make a list of items that aren't food, such as a new pair of shoes, a pedicure, a bubble bath or a movie night, as incentives to keep meeting your goals.

Have a plan. A goal without a plan is just a wish. Weight maintenance and healthy habits are lifelong journeys. Knowing the downfalls to success and making a plan to overcome them is key. Enlist a friend or family member to check in and keep you accountable. If possible, purchase a few sessions with a trainer to refresh your exercise routine or schedule monthly appointments with a dietitian.

Try something new. If your exercise or dietary routine has you in a rut, try something new. Sign up for an exercise or cooking class you've never tried before. Get a subscription to the latest cooking or healthy living magazine (for example, Cooking Light or Eating Well). It might inspire you to try new healthy foods or dishes!

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