

SMART Goals

Losing weight is one of the most popular New Year's resolutions. More than 90 percent of those who resolve to lose weight report that they will need some assistance in order to succeed.

When setting your weight loss goals for 2009, use the acronym SMART as your guide.

Personal goals related to your weight loss resolution should be:

Specific. A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general one. Answer these questions to make your goal specific.

- What do I want to accomplish?
- When will I accomplish the goal and what is my time frame?
- Where do I want to accomplish the goal?
- Which requirements and constraints can I identify for this goal?
- Who is involved?
- Why am I working on this goal? What are the specific reasons, purposes or benefits?

Measurable. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates and experience the exhilaration of achievement that can motivate you to reach your goal. Instead of saying "I'm going to start exercising," say "I'm going to walk 60 minutes each morning before work."

Achievable. You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry them out. Choose a weight loss goal that is attainable and reasonable. You may never weigh what you did when you were in high school, but with the right skills you can achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Realistic. To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work toward. Expect to lose 1 to 2 pounds per week. You didn't gain the weight overnight so don't expect to lose it overnight.

Timely. Pick a time when you plan to work to achieve your goal. Tell yourself that you will exercise between 4 and 5 pm. Break goals into small manageable chunks so you can begin to work toward something right away. Decide what you want to achieve within a certain time frame, such as, "I want to lose 10 pounds in the next 6 weeks."