Diabetes: Goal Setting

Solving Problems and Staying Motivated

Caring for diabetes is a lot of hard work. And most of that work is in your hands. It’s a lot for most people to handle.

As you learn more and live with diabetes, you probably have chosen some changes you want to make. You may have set goals and made a plan with the steps you will take to reach those goals. You may find it easy, but for many people, it is a daily struggle.

If you are having a hard time reaching your goal, it may be helpful to think about a change you made in the past. It does not matter if you choose something that worked well or something that did not work at all. In fact, sometimes the best lessons come from something that did not work out. Ask yourself these questions:

- What did I try to do?
- What motivated me to make that change?
- What helped me?
- What got in my way?
- What did I learn about myself?

As you think about your answers, you may see that all you needed to do was to make up your mind. You may have found that you need the support of others. What you learned about yourself can be a guide for how to solve problems and stay motivated in caring for your diabetes.
Breaking Down Barriers

Keep in mind that change takes time. Once you choose a goal, figure out the steps you will take this week and each week to reach that goal. Think of these as experiments, or things you will try to see if they work. If a step does not work, think about why and what you will do differently next week.

It is common to face some barriers as you work to reach your goals. Often these are problems that can be solved. The first step is to define the problem. A clear view of the problem will lead you to a clear solution.

You may think you already know exactly what the problem is. But often what you believe to be the problem is really only a symptom. When you face a barrier, the question to ask yourself is “why?” Keep asking yourself “why” until you get to the heart of the problem. A sign that you haven’t figured out the real problem, is that the solution does not work. Try not to get down on yourself, but keep asking “why” until you are clear about the real reason this is a problem for you.

It will also help to understand how you feel about the problem. Our feelings have a strong effect on our behavior. Many people believe that there is nothing they can do to change the way they feel. While this is somewhat true, you can try changing or reframing your thoughts. Ask yourself if there is another way to think about this problem. Ask yourself these questions:

- How do I feel about my problem?
- What are my thoughts about this problem?
- How will I feel if things do not change?
- How will I feel if things do change?
- How is this affecting my ability to enjoy my life?
- What would help me to think differently about this issue?
Staying Motivated

One of the best ways to stay motivated is to get the support you need. Talking with others who have diabetes or being part of a support group can be very powerful. Your family, friends, other people with diabetes and your health care team can all be cheerleaders for you. Studies have shown that getting on-going support for your self-management efforts can help you to do better in the long-run.

Keeping up to date can also help you to stay motivated. You have probably learned a lot about your own diabetes from your experiences. But there is always more to learn. As you live with this illness it is likely that you have questions that are different from the ones when you first were diagnosed. It is also likely that the way your diabetes is treated will change over time and there are always new discoveries.

Ask your doctor, nurse or dietitian the following questions:

1. Where can I get the support and help that I need?
2. Are there support groups in the area?
3. Are there trusted websites to which you can refer me?

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Write a **SMART goal** - Pick something important to you and break your larger goals down into small steps that you can really achieve!

**S** Specific
Your goal should be **simple** and very clear

**M** Measurable
You should know **how** you will reach your goal.

**A** Attainable
Your goal should be one you really “**can do**”.

**R** Relevant
Your goal should be **important** to you.

**T** Timely
It should have a **beginning** and an **end**.

The 7 areas that you can work on to improve your diabetes are:

- **Healthy Eating** - Eat at regular times, add whole grains, fruits, vegetables, decrease portions
- **Being Active** - Increase activity by walking 15 minutes 3 days/week, take the stairs, park farther away
- **Monitoring** - Check blood sugar 1-2X/day or 3X/week, record results, keep a journal. Monitoring can also include weight and blood pressure.
- **Taking Medications** - Take the right amount at the right time, learn how your medication works and what the side effects are
- **Problem Solving** - Take care of high and low blood sugars, sick days, know who to call and when
- **Healthy Coping** - Know when to ask for help and who you can talk to when you feel stressed or overwhelmed