

Setting S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Helping your patients to set a small **S.M.A.R.T.** goal and to follow through on it are key to successful behaviour change. While not everyone is equally ready to make a change, research shows that *even the smallest shift* that moves a person in the right direction is valuable because:

- Large, long-term goals need to be broken up into small, short-term, doable steps.
- Reaching small goals improves self-esteem and creates a sense of satisfaction and motivation to continue to move towards a long-term goal.
- Goal-setting helps people to clarify their values, make decisions consistent with their values and priorities, and monitor concrete progress.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals are:

Specific: How can your patient achieve this goal? What concrete steps will they need to take?

Measurable: How can your patient measure their progress? How often? For how long?

Action-Oriented: Is the goal dependent on actions? What will those actions be?

Realistic: Is this goal realistic? Can this be achieved in the next few weeks or months?

Time-Limited: What times of day or days of the week are best to work on this goal this month?

Questions to ask to help set a S.M.A.R.T. Goal:

- When is the last time you did this activity? (at this intensity?)
- How confident are you that you will reach this goal?
- What times of the day/week are most feasible for this goal?
- What might increase/decrease your odds of success?

Examples of S.M.A.R.T. Goals



I will walk to the mailbox 3 times a week for one month



I will call a friend or family member once a week for one month



I will read the newspaper 3 mornings a week for 4 weeks



I will attend a yoga class once a week for one month



Note: Documenting the goal and following up shows your support and valuing of the activity.