



## ***Making a Plan and Sticking to it.***

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### **How to Create a Wellness Plan that works for you.**

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*Why is it so hard to create a wellness plan that works for us and we can stick to? Change is difficult and uncomfortable and most of us resist change. The familiar becomes a false sense of security even if it is a bad habit or a behavior that doesn't serve us well. Fear prevents us from moving forward. The "what if" thoughts come into play. What if I lose money? What if it's the wrong decision? What if I can't keep it up? There can also be lack of clarity about our motivations, poor understanding of hidden obstacles that have been keeping us from achieving our goals until now, missing resources and knowledge, and underestimating the difficulty of establishing new habits. **HOWEVER**, Change is necessary, change is good, change is exciting, it's thrilling, it's energizing.*



Additionally, there are barriers that can come in the way of creating and maintaining these habits and achieving goals. A key part is to find a way over, under, around and through the barriers that get between you and your goals. It is best to identify and prepare for the barriers. There are "internal barriers" that also block our progress. These are composed of our personal belief systems, values, self-confidence, and self-talk, including your "internal devil" talk that sabotages our efforts at change. There are also "external barriers" that have goals derailed when a source of stress arises, there is a break in routine, a spouse or partner objects to you using time for self-care, families rebel against dietary changes, workload increases, money gets tight, an aging parent's health worsens etc. This can result in resuming smoking, drop your healthy eating habits, stop using techniques to manage stress, increase amount of sedentary activity, and so forth.

***Once you have identified these barriers, create a plan to move through them.*** If you stray from your plan, start it up again. Here are some good things to think about when creating your plan and planning for barriers.

1. Lack of planning. Spend the time with the steps we are going to talk about.
2. Trying too much too soon is a recipe for disaster – small steps and celebrate successes.
3. Convenience of location and time. Working out close to home or work, during lunch hour, or before or after work. Setting time to call friends when it works with your schedule. Decide to quit smoking when you are at your best to stick with it.
4. Comfort level – pick an activity you like, do not force yourself to do something you know you cannot motivate yourself to do. If weight loss is your goal and working out is a habit you'd like to implement and you like dancing, try Zumba.
5. Concrete, realistic and attainable goals.
6. Flexibility with your plan – when life gets in the way, how to reevaluate and start again.



The most helpful action steps are simple, specific, doable actions that you can perform with the highest likelihood of success. Small, incremental steps will allow you to create a track record of positive success and build your confidence in creating lifestyle change. A diet or exercise program that remains a “program” but never become a part of your lifestyle will fade when you get busy and it is next to impossible to maintain. The best way to have a plan stay with you is to create habits and have them incorporated in your life forever. The steps will help.

## Step 1

### Assess your wellness:

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First step is to get a notebook or journal to be able to assess your wellness. The many dimensions of personal wellness overlap and work together to create an integrated system of well being. Be honest with yourself about how satisfied you feel in each aspect of wellness so that you can create a wellness plan tailored to your needs. Think about the aspects of personal wellness and how they relate to you. Use the following categories to get started.



- **Emotional wellness.** This pertains to how well you are aware of, accepting of and able to deal with your feelings. Relationships, stress, self-esteem and life outlook are all factors that play into emotional wellness.
- **Social wellness.** This aspect of personal wellness has to do with how you see your place in the world and in society, and how well you adjust to your personal role in society.
- **Intellectual wellness.** This dimension refers to the amount of information and knowledge you take in, and the amount of creative, analytical thinking you put out. Learning, problem solving, and mental productivity are important aspects of intellectual wellness.
- **Spiritual wellness.** Wellness plans include spiritual wellness, not as a reference to religion, but rather as an indication of what you perceive to be the meaning of life and how you fit into it. Beliefs and value systems are a part of spiritual wellness.
- **Mental wellness.** This pertains to your mental health, and encompasses depression and anxiety, which may be either hereditary or circumstantial.
- **Financial wellness.** Being financially stable is an integral part of personal wellness.
- **Physical wellness.** This encompasses nutrition, physical fitness and the avoidance of unhealthy habits like smoking, drinking too much, and doing drugs.
- **Occupational wellness.** This aspect of personal wellness stresses the importance of a positive attitude towards work, and a rewarding and enriching career path.
- **Environmental wellness.** This relates to your level of environmental consciousness.
- **Medical wellness.** This involves health-promoting medical practices like medical check-ups, preventative healthcare, and medical health management.

**Ask yourself questions:** Do I feel strong balance and happy? Do I sleep well? Do I worry too much? Am I depressed? Do I stress about others? Do I stress about money? Do I have concerns about my health and body? Am I able to do the things I want to do?

Ask yourself how you feel about each category. Feel the freedom to boast about good things you do along with fears and wishes you have. When you find a category and you feel comfortable and happy – then celebrate the wellness categories you have already achieved. Cross out those with a single line (just in case the new more-wellness-focused-you wants to address it later)

## Step 2

### Identify areas that could use improvement:

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The categories left are ones you want to make changes in, so make a list of these in your journal on a new page. These fall into two subcategories: 1, wellness categories you want to address; and 2, ones you do not care about. Ask yourself how you feel about the categories and what is most important. Cross out the ones you do not care about with a single line.

Now you have an idea of what categories you want to address. On the next page write about each category and what you would like to improve in these categories and list the reasons why you're trying to change.

## Step 3

### Set goals related to improvements you want to make:

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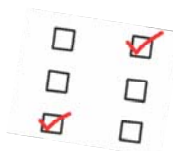


Of this list, pick out the top three most important ones on the list. These are the things you will start on first, the ones that are the most important now – right now. What you want to change, (not what you feel you need to change). Rewrite these statements into specific goals. For example, I want to lose 30 pounds rather than I want to lose weight. Write these goals on index cards or sticky notes and put them in places where you will see them daily and for the next three days to meditate on these three goals. Read them over and over throughout the day, including first thing in the morning and again right before going to bed. This will ensure you really do want to address this and help you to get excited and explore the possibilities.

## Step 4

### Evaluate your Resources and Personal Assets:

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After meditation, you next need to evaluate your resources and personal assets – Do I have equipment to work out? What is my food budget? Do I have support, friends, doctor? How much time do you have to devote to making these changes? Write these resources on a page in your notebook and decide how they can help your goal.

## Step 5

### Make it a habit:

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Looking at the list of the important things and considering the resources and decide two habit changes for the week that address your goal – buying different food, getting up early to work out, make an appointment with my PCP, start vitamins, start meditating, make plans with friends, finding a church for services, creating a budget, etc. Give yourself one or two weeks to make this habit, once you have mastered this habit it is time to create two more habits to change addressing your goal.

### Step 6

#### Record your progress and celebrate success:

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Outline in your journal or notebook each aspect of personal wellness and the goals you set to improve on those aspects. Not only does this help you celebrate your progress, but it gives you a marker for when it is time to start a new habit or a new goal. You can use a calendar also to mark important dates and checkpoints.

### Step 7

#### Create Reward system:

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Write down a list of rewards you'll give yourself for achieving small goals along the way to help you stay motivated. Create small rewards for each habit you master and then a big one when the goal is achieved. Rewards can be anything that makes you feel good: a book you want to read, a manicure or a massage, a new electronic gadget, or a trip to the beach.

### Step 8

#### Celebrate goal achievement and create wellness maintenance goal:

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Once you have achieved your goal, celebrate your success and create wellness maintenance. What is it that you need to do to keep this habit going? How to you keep the weight off, how to you continue to manage your stress? What are barriers to keeping this going?

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