

Welcome back. My name is April and today we are going to be talking about how to make a lifestyle change. When a client walks into my office, they often say I know that I need to do some changes with my diet, I know that I want to exercise more, but I really struggle with actually making the changes and they want to know how can I make these changes; I've really been struggling and that is often why they come to me for help. So, today we're going to talk about how to get started with making those changes and to do that we are going to talk about six steps to making a lifestyle change.

The first step is to be very realistic. That is one of the biggest mistakes that a lot of people make when they start a weight management program, as they might have some unrealistic expectations in mind as they get started and often if you are unrealistic, this can lead to feeling very frustrated when you don't meet these goals that you set for yourself, so I want to make sure that as you get started that you are extremely realistic. With television and magazine articles and all those types of things, there is a lot of information out there and a lot of this information is very misleading, so I want to make sure that as you get started and you make a goal. For example, some magazines say lose 10 pounds in a weekend. This is not a realistic healthy way to lose weight. Realistically, what we say is about a 10% weight loss in six months is very realistic if your body mass index or your BMI is over 25. To know what your body mass index is, just go across the table and check your height and your weight and that will tell you what your body mass index is. If you are over 25, that realistic weight loss is 10%, so, for example, if you weigh 250 pounds, a realistic weight loss for you would be 25 pounds in six months and that is about one to two pounds a week to be very realistic.

The second step is to have a realistic plan in place and to have a written plan, so you are being very realistic and you want to have a written plan in place and how we mainly recommend that you do this is to keep a food record every week. This is very important! Often with clients, this is one of the things that they don't want to do is write down everything that they eat and drink and they think about it as a chore, but I have to say that is the number one thing that people say really helps them to make these changes. It is very difficult to make a change if you don't know what you are doing and when you are eating, it is a habit and something that you have been doing for a long time, so it is very difficult to know how to make these changes if you are not writing everything down and people notice is that if they write down their foods, the best way to keep a food record is to keep it in your pocket and every time that you eat and drink make sure that you write it down as you do it; don't wait until the end of the day or you won't self monitor yourself as you could, so really, ideally, for the food record to work for you, you need to write down the foods as you eat and drink them. The other part of having a written plan is to make sure that you set weekly or daily goals for yourself. This is another area where you want to be extremely realistic and what we call them is smart goals if you are not very familiar with goal setting and that means specific, measureable, attainable, realistic and timely, so you don't want to say something like 'you're going to eat less this week', as that is not very specific or anything, so you are not quite sure if you met your goal. What I want to do is I want to go to some Veterans and I want to get their take on how keeping food records and setting weekly goals has helped them.

The food record does help you. It keeps reminding you, okay, I've had this today and I don't need any more.

I keep a daily journal and daily log of virtually everything that I eat and if I happen to have a week or two where I have not lost weight or gained, I can go back to my log and I can see, well okay, I didn't exercise for three days or I had a pizza and a burger all in the same week.

I knew where I wanted to go, but I picked small ones, as far as I knew I wanted to lose about 100 pounds right off the bat, but I my goal was always 10 pounds at a time and once I met that goal, I felt like I did that and now I can do another 10 and another 10 and if you take the small goals, it will turn into a big goal.

The third step is to plan ahead. There are many situations that might trip you up, such as special events, special occasions, holidays. A lot of people say that they gain weight over the holidays, so you want to plan for these in advance. Also, other things like just eating out with friends and those types of things might get in your way, so for situations like these, you want to plan ahead. Here are some tips from our Veterans on different things that they have tried that have worked for them for planning ahead for situations that can trip you up.

The Thanksgiving holiday and Christmas holidays for me was an excuse to eat.

I do have a tendency to overeat no matter which holiday it is, but I do watch it, but they have so many different plates, you try a little bit here and here and pretty soon it is overeating.

There is plenty of food to eat and you have to make it your goal not to overeat. My family and I were trying to organize a family reunion and we finally came to the realization having it in a place where food can be ordered individually and they eat whatever they want, so you don't have a bunch of food around that people think they have to eat.

For more tips, look on the website on the handout "Special Occasion Eating and Eating with Others".

The next step is problem solving. Let's say that you are keeping your food record every week and you are writing these realistic goals and you don't meet them and what do you do then? That happens to a lot of people and don't let it frustrate you or discourage you; just make sure that you learn from the situation and you move on. A lot of times when people don't meet their goals, it was because of that first step; they weren't very realistic. A good example of this is if you don't workout now and you make a goal to workout for the recommended 30 minutes every day of the week and that is your goal, it is specific; it is timely, but it is not very reasonable, so a lot of people won't meet their goals because they weren't very realistic in the first place. A better example would be if

you don't workout now, maybe walking for 10 minutes two times in the next week – that would be a more reasonable goal. Make sure that you are very kind to yourself and that you are doing something that is very realistic that you can do. If your goal is realistic, you want to look at maybe the other things that got in your way, so with problem solving, you might want to think if my goal was the physical activity and I did set it for 10 minutes two times a week, did you schedule it into your week. A lot of times we won't do things if we aren't very specific about when we are going to do it, so, for example, you might want to say on Tuesday and on Thursday I'm going to walk for 10 minutes at my coffee break at work. Because you have that plan in place, you are much more likely to do it. The other thing to think about is how can you set yourself up to remind yourself that you are going to do this, so maybe have your walking shoes in your car when you go to work on Tuesday and Thursday. Set yourself up to meet your goals and problem solve through those issues when you don't meet your goals and it is much more likely that you will do better the next week, so don't get frustrated if you don't meet your goal, just use it as a learning process and move on the next weeks.

Step 5 is getting support from others. A lot of people try to do this alone and that is often why we recommend that you meet with your registered dietitian locally, but the other thing too is if you have somebody to exercise with, you are much more likely to get more physical activity. The same thing with the diet changes that you want to make and if your spouse or whoever you live with or if you live alone, maybe you have a friend who is doing this with you, that is going to be a lot more helpful if you have someone to make the change with you. It is very difficult if one person in the house is eating other foods and you are eating this, so a lot of times you are going to want to ask people who you live with for some support. A lot of times people have very good intentions and they want to give the support and they want to help us with this, but they don't realize what is helpful and what might sabotage you, so you might want to be very specific about that as well. If someone is doing something that makes it tougher for you, just let them know, be very specific and tell them what they can do to help and then if they are supportive, make sure that you thank them for that support so that they keep doing it. For more tips, go to our website and look at the handout, "Involving Others in Your Weight Control Program" or the handout, "What If My Spouse Isn't Helpful?".

Step 6 is reward yourself. You've been doing all this hard work and it is important when you meet your goals to reward yourself. Often people reward themselves with food, so what I'm going to ask you to do is to try not to do that. If you need some ideas on this, there is a handout in our section that talks about some non-food rewards, but it is not a good idea if you were working on cutting back from eating potato chips throughout the week if you think well, I did really good, so now this weekend I can have some chips. That is kind of getting yourself back into those habits that you were trying to get away from, so just make sure that you use non-food rewards.

In summary, to be successful and to start your lifestyle change, you want to be very realistic, you want to have a written plan that is specific and you want to ask for support from other people. If you make mistakes and you're not perfect, don't worry about, just problem solve as you go along. The assignment for this week is to write one smart

goal, as we talked about, the specific, measureable, timely and reasonable goal and we want you to do one for diet and one for physical activity for this week and make sure that you keep your food record.

Congratulations on completing another week towards making your healthy lifestyle changes. I hope to see you next week.