

Exercise: Goal Setting

Motivation for exercise may be enhanced by following the S.M.A.R.T. goal-setting principle.

The S.M.A.R.T. principle stands for:

S	M	A	R	T
Specific	Measurable	Adjustable	Realistic	Time-based

1	Specific. Set specific goals: an example of a specific goal is “I want to complete the 5 K (3 mile) Heart Walk in October”.
2	Measurable. The above statement is a measurable goal, however to stay on track with your goal, measure your progress with an interval measurable goal. In this case, if you have eight weeks to prepare, plan to walk one-half mile weekly each day of the first week, then progress to 1 mile the 2nd week, 1½ mile the 3rd week and so on. Keep a record of your progress; using a journal may help keep you on track.
3	Adjustable. Making adjustable goals means you are flexible. In the above case, if you have a setback due to illness or injury, you may adjust your goal to do the 1 mile walk in October, or find another 5 K walk to register for in the following month.
4	Realistic. Realistic goals mean you start where you are and set your goal accordingly. The above example is realistic if you haven’t been a regular exerciser. Running a marathon would not be a realistic goal. Once you’ve completed a 5 K walk, you may wish to set your sights on a 10 K and so on. This would be an example of progressive, realistic goal setting.
5	Time-based. The example above: “I want to complete the 5K Heart Walk in October” is time based. The 8-week time-line is short enough to prevent boredom. In general, goals that reach out beyond 6 months are too long to keep you interested and motivated. Set and re-evaluate goals every 2-3 months.

Adapted from: Quinn E. Motivation and goal-setting for exercise. How to stick with your fitness program., <http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/sportpsychology/a/motivation.htm> Accessed Feb. 4, 2009.