

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Setting goals is linked to successful dietary and lifestyle behavior changes. It provides patients with structure and the ability to track their progress over time.

Use the **S.M.A.R.T.** acronym to help your patients set goals they can achieve.

Make sure goals are:

Specific—The goal should be clear and focused on a particular behavior.

Example: "I will eat out no more than once per week."

Measurable—Quantifying the goal will make it clear when your patients meet, or do not meet, their goals.

Example: "I will exercise for 30 minutes at least 4 days per week."

Achievable—Goals should be realistic and fit with patients' current circumstances, so they feel the goals are achievable. It is best to start slowly with new behaviors, especially lifestyle changes they perceive as difficult.

Example: "I will eat ½ cup of vegetables with dinner at least 3 days per week."

Rewarding and Relevant—Your patients should perceive some benefit from meeting the goals they set. Goals should also be rewarding, worthwhile, and flexible.

Example: "To prepare for a 5K walk in 12 weeks, I will begin walking 15 minutes during lunch 3 times a week."

Timely—Goals should be trackable and have a timeline to encourage patients to work steadily on their goals.

Example: "For at least the next 4 weeks, I will take a healthy lunch to work at least twice per week."



Other Tips for Helping Patients Achieve S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Involve Patients in Goal-Setting

Have your patients set goals that are important for them. Have them set no more than 2-3 goals to keep them from becoming overwhelmed.

Turn Failure Into Success

Let your patients know that slip-ups will happen and that you do not expect perfection.

Frame slip-ups as learning experiences that patients can use to help them meet their goals with their next attempt.



Use the 90/10 Rule

If patients can practice healthy habits 90% of the time, they will realize health benefits.

Allowing them to "relax" their efforts 10% of the time is more likely to lead to success.

Track Progress

Encourage patients to track their progress in meeting goals, which will promote self-efficacy and self-accountability. Consider the electronic

New eTools To Help Patients Achieve S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Patient APPS

CheckMark Goals - Coach.me - HabitSee - MyFitnessPal - My Healthy Habits - Strides - Way of Life

Patient Websites

Choosemyplate.gov - MyFitnessPal.com - Success.com

All clinicians can assist patients in setting goals. However, consider referring your patients to a registered dietitian nutritionist to support them in their journey to a healthful dietary pattern.