

**Q.** How can I get back on track to better health?

**A.** Ever feel like your diet, exercise routine, work schedule, or sleep habits have gone off track?

Lots of things can get in the way of making healthy choices...like a global pandemic. It's had an impact on nearly everyone.

Gained a few pounds? Missed some workouts? Skipped sleep to binge-watch shows? You're not alone. But it doesn't mean you're a failure. And it doesn't mean you should give up on developing healthy habits.

So how do you get back on track? Any kind of behavior change (good or bad) typically doesn't happen overnight. It's a process. And just about everyone has a setback or two when trying to develop new habits.

But it's worth the effort. Healthy lifestyle habits can cut your risk for chronic disease and help you live longer.<sup>1</sup>

If you find yourself making choices that don't line up with your goals, just get back on track. Here's how:

**Step 1 – Recognize**

When you recognize that you've gone off course, stop. It's the easiest step to help you get back on track. When you've strayed from your goal to improve your diet, drink more water, exercise or get better sleep, you're usually the first to know.

Stop and figure out what you're doing, and why. And you'll be one step closer to getting back on track.



**Step 2 – Make a Plan**

So your plan to eat more fruits and vegetables, lose 10 pounds, or get regular exercise didn't go as planned. Now what?

After you take a minute to recognize what went wrong, set some new goals. Make sure they're SMART. Your goals should be Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, and have a Timeline for completion.<sup>2</sup>

This exercise will help you evaluate your goals and make adjustments to help you get back on track.

For example, you can't expect to make the switch overnight from skipping workouts and watching TV to being active most days. You need an action plan that starts with small goals. Try exercising for 20 minutes at the same time every day. When that becomes a habit, move on to longer exercise sessions, harder workouts, and less TV time.

Think it through. What's the one thing you can do today, in three days, in a week, and in a month, to get back on track and work towards your goal?

**Step 3 – Choose to Change**

Changing behavior is really about repetition. It's about being organized.

If you didn't stick to your diet or exercise plan, it just means you haven't repeated the behavior enough.

It's not enough to say you're going to change. You have to choose to change, take action, and do it over and over. Creating accountability can help.<sup>3</sup> Here are some things you can do:

Set an alarm on your mobile device reminding you to workout, have a glass of water, get to bed on time, etc.

Work with a health coach, doctor, dietitian, or personal trainer to hold you accountable, encourage you to keep going, and measure your progress.

Keep track of your daily choices like calories, steps, sleep, or how much water you're drinking.

Ask for help from family and friends to help you stay on track. And get out of the pattern of all-or-nothing thinking.

Need to get back on track? Now is always the best time to get started.

**References**

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