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Share the Wellness Tip

Making Healthy Behavior Changes

We know that making health-related changes and sticking to them can be a challenge: research suggests there are key behaviors that can help. Here are four key research-based behaviors:

1. Set goals

Focus on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) goals, commonly used for making health behavior changes. An analysis of successful weight loss strategies from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics found strong evidence this type of goal setting is effective. One example of a specific weekly challenge goal is to eat at least one colorful fruit or vegetable at each meal.

2. Track your progress

Using a journal is important to monitor behavior, develop coping strategies and enhance self-efficacy, all parts of successful behavior change. A 2012 year-long study of overweight and obese women in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* found that the women who kept food records and tracked progress lost significantly more weight than dieters who did not monitor their progress.

3. Have social support

Research repeatedly suggests that family and other social support plays an important role in successful weight loss and maintenance. For example, researchers reported in a 2011 study in *Obesity* that women with the most family support were more likely to lose weight than those without support.

4. Add activity

Physical activity by itself may not help with weight loss, but people who have successfully lost and maintained weight stay consistently active. Results of ten year report for the National Weight Control Registry show that participants who stick with a high level of physical activity after their initial weight loss maintain most of that weight loss successfully.

Making healthy behavior changes can seem daunting at first, but research suggests there are specific steps people can take to lose weight and maintain that loss.

Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Evidence Analysis Library

