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Healthy on the Job!

Small Steps to Health & Wealth Workplace Newsletter

Family & Community Health Sciences
Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Strategy 23

Focus: Monitor Your Progress

Small Steps to Health and Wealth™

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Deskercise!

Take the stairs if you have a choice between elevators or stairs at your worksite. A 150-lb. person will burn an average of 7 calories per minute walking up stairs as opposed to one calorie per minute taking an elevator.

Monitor Your Progress and Reward Success

http://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/workbook/23_Monitor_Your_Progress_and_Reward_Success.pdf

According to the book *Changing For Good*, environmental controls modify cues that precede and trigger problem behavior and rewards follow and reinforce positive action. The authors recommend rewarding progress at each successive step forward (e.g., saving \$100) rather than waiting for more visible progress later (e.g., saving \$1,000).

To know when it is appropriate to celebrate success, track the journey from where you are now to where you want to be. Some people do this by keeping a journal and describing their feelings about making progress and/or relapsing. Others use computer spreadsheets or graph paper to plot progress toward their goals (e.g., 170 pounds to 140 pounds or \$50 in savings to \$1,000).

To change health or financial practices, it is critical to know how much we eat, smoke, exercise, spend, and save. Research indicates that you increase the odds of successful behavior change by keeping written records to increase self-awareness. It is estimated that people underestimate their energy

intake by an average of one-third and overestimate their physical activity by about one half.

Regular progress checks provide an opportunity to either celebrate small successes or rein in relapses before too much damage is done. A study of Weight Watchers® participants found that those who weighed themselves frequently and used a 3-pound gain as a “cue” to restart their diet were more likely than others to have long-term success. Similarly, keeping a running total of credit card purchases provides a cue about exceeding an amount that you can comfortably repay.

Reward Yourself for Making Progress

Many small rewards for meeting small goals have been shown to be more effective than large rewards for long and difficult goals. Rewards can be external or internal or both. External rewards are provided by others. A health example is getting paid by your employer to lose weight. A financial example is receiving “free money” as a match for an employer 401(k) plan deposit. People provide their own internal rewards which can be tangible or intangible. Tangible rewards include inexpensive items like a movie rental. Intangible rewards include activities like a long, relaxing bubble bath or walk in the park.

“Wanting something is not enough. You must hunger for it. Your motivation must be absolutely compelling in order to overcome the obstacles that will invariably come your way.”

Les Brown (motivational speaker)

Health and Wealth Action Steps This Week

Health

Use the worksheet below to identify meaningful progress points toward your health goal.

Decide how many progress points will result in a reward.

List at least one external reward and one internal reward for positive health behaviors.

Wealth

Use the worksheet to identify meaningful progress points toward your wealth goal.

Decide how many progress points will result in a reward.

List at least one external reward and one internal reward for positive financial behaviors.

Identify your start (current status) and your finish (goal) and four steps (progress indicators) in between.

Health Goal

Start _____ Finish

Wealth Goal

Start _____ Finish

Tips of the Day

Use positive self-talk to reward positive action such as “Yes!,” “Way to go,” and “Awesome!”

Find positive role models for health and financial practices and consider their advice.

Change health and/or financial practices with a friend and reward yourself together for making progress.



<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/money/>

<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/health/>

<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/>

Ask yourself what types of internal and external rewards would best motivate you to take positive action to reach your health and wealth goals. Does your employer provide any external rewards?

What is the easiest way for you to monitor your progress toward your health and wealth goals?