



## BE POSITIVE

Sometimes just *thinking* about making a lifestyle change is overwhelming. People often get discouraged before they even begin. It's important to be positive when making these changes.

**SET A GOAL.** Think about what you want to change. Do you want to eat a healthier diet? Increase your level of physical activity? Stop using tobacco products? Write down your goal(s) and put it somewhere you can see it frequently.

**HAVE A PLAN.** If your resolution is to quit smoking, develop a plan on how you intend to do it. The more specific you can be, the better. What day will you quit? How will cravings be handled? What will you do instead of reaching for a cigarette after meals? What will you do if you have a relapse? The more prepared you are, the better your chances of succeeding.

**MONITOR YOUR SELF-TALK.** We all have an inner dialogue with ourselves. You may be surprised to learn how many times you catch yourself saying critical and negative things, such as "I'll never be able to quit smoking" or "I'm too heavy" or "I hate to exercise." The more frequently these negative thoughts are repeated, the stronger they become. The first step in overcoming negative self-talk is to become aware of it. The next step is to replace these self-defeating thoughts with positive and productive ones. Use positive affirmations such as "I have more energy when I walk every day" or "I feel better when I eat healthy foods." Repeat them over and over to yourself, and they will replace your negative self-talk.

**TAKE SMALL STEPS.** You are more likely to be successful if you break down a big goal into smaller, more manageable goals. If the thought of trying to lose 40 pounds is overwhelming, set a goal of losing 10. After you reach your first goal, try another modest and attainable goal. Your confidence – and motivation – will be bolstered by your recent success.

**FIND A PARTNER.** Walking during your lunch hour may be easier and more fun when you bring along a friend or co-worker who has similar goals. You can provide support and encouragement to each other. It can be very reassuring to learn that you are not the only person who is trying to make a lifestyle change.

**CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESS.** As you continue the journey to better health, look back at your goals and congratulate yourself on any achievements. It's important to acknowledge what has worked well – and what can be improved.

**APPEAL TO A HIGHER POWER.** If you believe in a higher power, ask for support in your pursuit of good health. Faith, prayer, and spiritual beliefs can play an important role in helping you make positive behavior changes. Your sense of spiritual wellness can help you overcome personal trials and things you cannot change. If it suits you, use spiritual images in visualizations, affirmations, and expectations about your health and your life.

**KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE.** It's common to get discouraged when you are learning new behaviors, especially when the old habits are more convenient and comfortable. Remind yourself often of your goals. You can do it!