Do you want to meet your goal weight in 2015—or at least jump-start your weight loss? In the spirit of beginning fresh in the new year, TOPS gathered a team of experts to develop a simple plan to help you begin making healthy changes.

A registered dietitian and a certified personal trainer have come up with small goals for eating better and moving more each week. To help boost your spirit, a certified professional coach added a third goal for each week.

The plan and its companion articles follow the TOPS philosophy of making sustainable changes—in other words, turning healthy choices into healthy habits. We hope that they will help you feel better, move more freely and gain the confidence to live your life to the fullest, enjoying your time with the people you love.

Get Healthy & Active

Meet Your Goals:

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Resolution Reset

Try a Different Approach to Make 2015 the Year You Meet Your Healthy Goals

By Rochelle Melander

At the beginning of the year, everyone talks about making New Year’s resolutions. Yet many of us may feel like we set the same weight-loss and fitness goals every year without achieving lasting success. In fact, it’s commonly thought that most people drop their resolutions by the third Monday in January.

Let’s make this year different! Psychologists have studied the process of setting goals, and they offer concrete tools to help us succeed. We can keep our resolutions. Read on to find out how. And if you decide to give the Get Healthy & Active Plan a go, you’ll find that we incorporated a number of these techniques to help you.

1ST TOOL FOR SUCCESS:

Envision your future. When we decide to lose weight, we envision a new life for ourselves: We’ll climb stairs with ease, shop anywhere for clothes and feel good when we step on the scale at the doctor’s office. A study by psychologists Ken Sheldon and Sonja Lyubomirsky found that writing out a vision of one’s
best possible self increased positive feelings and helped people achieve their goals.

Make this year different. Record a vision of what you want your life to be like in a year. Write in the present tense, use as many sense words as possible, and focus on what you’ll be able to do after a year of eating less and exercising more. Keep this vision in front of you as you set your New Year’s goals, reminding yourself that the goals are stepping stones toward this vision of a healthier, happier you.

2ND TOOL FOR SUCCESS:

Take small steps. When we set resolutions, we often vow to make big changes: become a vegetarian or run every day. According to psychologist Robert Maurer, author of One Small Step Can Change Your Life: The Kaizen Way, drastic changes can rattle the fear center of our brain. We panic and revert to familiar, comfort-seeking behaviors—like eating a burger. The solution? Take tiny steps toward a goal and we won’t feel afraid.

Make this year different. Take your list of big, vague goals and make them specific. Add small steps you can take toward each goal. Tackle one step at a time. When that step becomes a habit, try another one.

For example, turn a vague goal of eating better into a more specific goal of choosing more fresh fruits and vegetables, so you can achieve your goal of losing weight. Small steps might include eating a salad for lunch; having a healthy, 100-calorie snack every afternoon at 3; or eating only whole-grain bread. The Get Healthy & Active Plan suggests similar mini goals.

3RD TOOL FOR SUCCESS:

Schedule it! We have a saying at my house: If it’s not on the calendar, it doesn’t happen. Research backs me up. In a study of women who agreed to perform a breast self-exam, nearly 100 percent of the group who wrote down when and where they’d do the exam did it. When we know when, where and how we’ll complete a task, we’re more likely to accomplish it.

Make this year different. Schedule your small steps. It often helps to pair new habits with something you already do, like drinking your morning coffee. A contractor with a demanding job always grilled for his family on Sunday afternoon. When he set the goal of making healthier food choices, he grilled extra chicken on Sunday so that he’d have enough for the entire week.

4TH TOOL FOR SUCCESS:

Decide early. Life comes with choices. Eat dinner out, and the server wants to know if we’d like our fish broiled, baked, grilled, deep-fried or pan-fried. Yikes! In Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength, social psychologist Roy F. Baumeister and science writer John Tierney say that our ability to make decisions that support our goals decreases throughout the day. But we can bypass this problem by deciding ahead of time.

Make this year different. Make a plan for tackling difficult choices at the beginning of the week by using what psychologist Peter Gollwitzer calls an “implementation intention.” The simple plan has three parts: When I [insert external cue], I will [insert action] so that I can [insert goal]. For example: When I encounter the desert table, I will choose fruit so that I can achieve my goal of eating healthier.

5TH TOOL FOR SUCCESS:

Reset and renew. Will following these suggestions mean you’ll be able to keep all of your resolutions? I hope so. But life happens. When we finish a tough week at work, we might slip and treat ourselves to a big helping of comfort food. Or we might skip a few workouts to catch up on sleep.

Does that mean we’ve joined the ranks of the failed resolution keepers? Not necessarily. Each day offers an opportunity to begin again. Reset your plan, and renew your life.

Rochelle Melander is a certified professional coach, speaker and author of 10 books, including Write-A-Thon: Write Your Book in 26 Days (And Live to Tell About It). She regularly leads classes and coaches individuals and groups on writing and wellness. Web: www.writenowcoach.com.
EAT BETTER

Mindful Food Choices

Lasting Change Begins With Small Goals & Simple Tools for Better Nutrition

By Katie Ferraro, MPH, RD, CDE

Do you find yourself thinking, “I know what I need to do to eat better, but I just can’t motivate myself to do it”? For many of us, it is not a lack of education that inhibits our healthy-weight intentions, but a lack of motivation.

For others of us, the idea of “eating better”—and all of the food choices we need to make to reach that goal—can seem daunting. That’s why TOPS suggests you make small changes over time that will add up to a healthier lifestyle.

The nutrition portion of the 10-week Get Healthy & Active Plan includes simple ways to begin eating better. Along with those suggested goals, the following will help you stay motivated and accountable:

**Write it down.** Tracking what you eat can be a valuable tool for successful weight loss, which is why the Get Healthy & Active Plan begins with a goal of keeping a food journal. After all, even the best-intentioned of us can underestimate how much we eat.

Use an old-fashioned journal, online program, personal tracker or phone app to keep tabs on your food choices each day—and be specific about amounts. Try to write down your progress throughout the day—as opposed to looking back at the end of the day—for the most accurate results.

**Give yourself homework.** Homework isn’t just for school anymore! Each week work on a new goal for better...
eating to initiate healthy habits. The Get Healthy & Active Plan suggests healthy-eating behaviors for you, such as choosing fresh vegetables for a daily snack in between meals. You can add your homework to your food journal—and you can include your exercise, too—to keep yourself on track.

**Start a supper club.** It’s hard to eat well if you often eat at restaurants—so start cooking at home more! The more meals and snacks you can prepare out of your own kitchen, the greater control you have over what goes in your mouth.

More home cooking doesn’t mean you have to forgo your social life, though. Begin a supper club and invite friends over for healthy, home-prepared meals. Set guidelines for the meals you will prepare. For example, agree that half the plate will be made up of fruits and vegetables or offer starch servings no larger than the size of an adult’s fist. Then use your supper club as another tool to stick to your plan.

**Pack your own lunch.** For people who work outside the home, lunch-time can be devastating if you are not prepared. If you don’t pack your own lunch, you will likely find yourself at the office vending machine or in a fast-food drive-thru lane. You know you are going to get hungry at work, so plan accordingly and pack your lunch and snacks every day. Keep in mind: “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.”

**It’s OK to reward success, but focus on rewards that are not food-based.**

**Don’t deprive yourself.** As you travel on your path toward more healthful eating, do not deprive yourself. Depriving yourself of certain foods you want to eat will only make you more likely to crave them. Instead, incorporate these foods—in reasonable amounts—into your plan.

Savor small morsels of rich food or the occasional dessert. Falling off the proverbial wagon every now and then is not an excuse to quit your healthy lifestyle plan altogether. If you can plan for minor setbacks and remove the guilt associated with eating certain foods, you will likely be more successful in the long term. (For help managing setbacks, turn to page 30.)

**Aim for success beyond the scale.** If your ultimate goal is to lose weight, then a scale is going to be part of your routine. Try to weigh yourself in the same state at the same time every day (i.e., in the morning and unclothed). Some people find that weighing each day helps correct small upward trends before they get out of hand. Alternatively, others find that daily weighing can lead to obsessiveness about the number on the scale—so find a balance that works for you.

Keep in mind that becoming more healthful is not just determined by how much you weigh. Celebrate other successes beyond the scale like being able to notch your belt one loop tighter, achieving a personal best time in a power walk, or packing your lunch to work every day over the past week. It is OK to reward successes, but focus on rewards that are not food-based. Buy yourself a new piece of workout gear, schedule a massage, or reward yourself with a much-deserved midday nap.

Katie Ferraro, MPH, RD, CDE, is a Registered Dietitian, Certified Diabetes Educator and Assistant Clinical Professor of Nutrition at the University of California–San Francisco and the University of San Diego. Blog: www.fiberisthefuture.com.
Fitness Basics
Getting in Shape Is as Easy as Moving in 1, 2, 3 Ways

By Kelly James-Enger, ACE-CPT

The 10-week Get Healthy & Active Plan is based on three aspects of health—nutrition, fitness and wellness. Addressing all three aspects helps you improve each individual area as well as your overall health—and helps you achieve your KOPS goal weight.

When it comes to getting fit, experts take a similar approach. For optimal overall fitness, you should include cardiovascular exercise (cardio), strength training and flexibility exercises as part of your regular routine. Taken together, they help keep different parts of your body—your heart, lungs and cardiovascular system; your muscles and bones; and your joints and connective tissue—in prime condition.

According to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, adults ages 18 to 64 should get the following amounts of exercise:

- 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise—or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise—each week

Stretch It Out
Hold each stretch for 10 to 30 seconds, and never stretch past the point of pain. You

■ Quad Stretch
   Stand next to a wall for balance, feet under your hips. Keep your right foot on the ground with your right hand touching the wall for balance.
   Bend your left knee to bring your left foot up to your left hand, and gently pull your foot to stretch your quadriceps. Hold the stretch. Then put your foot down, and repeat on the other side.

■ Hamstring Stretch
   Stand with your feet under your hips and step forward with your left foot about 12 inches ahead of your right foot.
   Keeping your legs straight, hinge from your hips and reach toward the shin of your left leg. Hold the stretch. Then return to your original position, and repeat on the other side.

The information presented is educational and may not suit an individual’s particular health situation. Always check with your
• muscle-strengthening activities two or more days a week that work the major muscle groups (legs, back, chest, shoulders, arms and core)

Keep in mind this is the minimum amount recommended for health benefits; if you want to lose weight or maintain a weight loss, you may want to perform more exercise. Our 10-week plan is designed to help you ramp up gradually and safely, even if you’ve been inactive or haven’t exercised much during the holidays. It includes:

Cardio. The fitness component of the 10-week Get Healthy & Active Plan starts with walking, which is the most popular way to get aerobic, or cardiovascular, exercise. Aerobic exercise includes activities that use the major muscle groups of the body and can be performed without stopping for more than a few minutes. Jogging, bicycling, swimming, climbing stairs, jumping rope, dancing and many group exercise classes like Zumba are all considered cardio. This kind of exercise strengthens your cardiovascular system; burns calories; and reduces your risk of health issues like heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and some kinds of cancer.

Strength training. While cardio exercise uses your major muscle groups, it doesn’t do a lot to make them stronger. That’s where strength training comes in. When you strength train, you target one or more specific muscle groups for brief periods of time to force your muscles to work harder than they usually do in day-to-day life. Bodyweight exercises like pushups, crunches and squats are examples of strength training moves. You can also strength train using dumbbells, weight machines or resistance bands.

Strength training doesn’t typically burn as many calories as cardio activity, but it builds stronger muscles and bones and helps boost your metabolism, which helps with weight loss and maintenance. The more muscle you have, the more calories your body uses, even when you’re simply sitting and watching TV.

Flexibility. Cardio and strength exercise make a powerful combination for losing and maintaining weight. For complete overall fitness, a third component—flexibility—can help you stay limber, maintain your range of motion as you get older, and reduce your risk of injury. That’s why the American College of Sports Medicine recommends doing flexibility exercises two or three days a week. If you already do yoga, Pilates or a combination of the two, you’re already incorporating flexibility moves into your regular workout. Otherwise, add stretches like the ones in the sidebar below to your routine two or three times a week.

Kelly James-Enger has been an ACE-certified personal trainer since 2007 and is the author of books including Small Changes, Big Results: A 12-Week Action Plan to a Better Life (with Ellie Krieger, RD). She’s also a successful “loser,” having maintained a 45-pound weight loss for 25 years.

should feel a gentle pulling sensation but no discomfort.

**Chest Stretch**

Stand with your feet under your hips. With your thumbs pointing toward the ceiling and your arms straight, lift your arms to your sides, making a letter “T” with your arms.

Gently pull your hands backward to stretch your chest and upper body. Hold the stretch, and then return to your original position.

**Back Stretch**

A. Get on all fours with your knees bent, hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Inhale as you lift your head up and pull your shoulders back to exaggerate the curve of your spine, like a cow. Hold the stretch.

B. Exhale and drop your head as you round your back up, like an angry cat. Hold the stretch, and then return to your original position.

*doctor or healthcare provider before beginning a new program.*
Ready to make healthy changes and get fit? This simple plan encourages you to eat better, move more and stay on track with three weekly goals.

Designed by a registered dietitian, a certified personal trainer and a certified professional coach, the plan builds upon itself, so that you continue to work on goals from previous weeks as you incorporate three new goals each week.

These healthy behaviors are recommendations, but you can do as much or as little of the plan as you like. If you want to focus on simply eating better first, for example, you can work on just those goals. Do what is right for you now.

We hope this plan helps you as you work toward weight loss—and keeping off pounds. Here’s to a healthier, happier you in 2015!


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 1</th>
<th>WEEK 2</th>
<th>WEEK 3</th>
<th>WEEK 4</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EAT BETTER</strong></td>
<td><strong>MOVE MORE</strong></td>
<td><strong>STAY ON TRACK</strong></td>
<td><strong>EAT BETTER</strong></td>
<td><strong>MOVE MORE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Begin keeping a food journal, writing down everything you eat on at least 3 days.</td>
<td>Begin drinking 1 glass of water with at least 2 meals each day.</td>
<td>Start making half your dinner plate fruits or vegetables each day.</td>
<td>Each day begin swapping 1 serving of refined/white grains with a whole grain (e.g., eat whole-wheat pasta instead of white).</td>
<td>Review your food journal from previous weeks, and begin writing down everything you eat on at least 4 days.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Begin wearing a pedometer for at least 3 days a week. At the end of this week, calculate your average number of daily steps.</td>
<td>For 3 days, add 1,000 steps to your average number of daily steps.</td>
<td>For 3 days, add 2,000 steps to your average number of daily steps from Week 1. (You’re now walking about 1 mile more per day.)</td>
<td>For 3 days, add 3,000 steps to your average number of daily steps from Week 1.</td>
<td>For 3 days, walk at least the number of steps as in Week 4. Consciously speed up and walk faster for 1 or 2 min. at different times during your walk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose a positive statement, or mantra, below that supports your goals. Repeat it to yourself while brushing your teeth. • Today I choose joy! • Good things take time. • I can, and I will!</td>
<td>When you catch yourself reviewing old hurts or beliefs (“My aunt always criticizes my weight.” “I’ll never be able to walk a mile.”), try this: Take a deep breath in. As you exhale, let go of the thought.</td>
<td>Connect with someone who supports your journey toward better health. Schedule meetings each week to cheer each other on.</td>
<td>Replace your earlier mantra with a new one beginning this week. Every time the phone rings, check your posture. Sit or stand taller and say to yourself, “I’m good at [name a strength].”</td>
<td>Create a playlist of uplifting songs for your walks and/or begin listening to your favorite upbeat music while cooking.</td>
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The information presented is educational and may not suit an individual’s particular health situation. Always check with your doctor or healthcare provider before beginning a new program. *If you do not have the TOPS fitness cards, you may choose to do strength exercises found in your chapter’s copy of Real Life or in past issues of the magazine, available free in the Members Area of www.tops.org.
### WEEK 1

- I can, and I will!
- Good things
- Today I choose joy!

### WEEK 2

- Brushing your teeth.
- Say it to yourself while
- Your goals. Repeat
- Statement, or mantra,
- Choose a positive
- Daily steps.

### WEEK 3

- At the end of this
- Week, calculate your
- Least 3 days a week.
- Begin wearing a
- Pedometer for at
- Everything you eat on
- Journal, writing down
- Begin keeping a food
- Journal from previous

### WEEK 4

- When you catch your-
- Ule meetings each
- Better health. Sched-
- Your journey toward
- One who supports
- Connect with some-

### WEEK 5

- As you exhale, let go
- Hurts or beliefs ("My
- Self reviewing old
- Mantra with a new
- Replace your earlier
- Repeat mantra with a

### WEEK 6

- For 3 days, continue
- Walking the same
- Number of steps as in
- Week 4. After warm-
- Up, walk as fast as
- You can for 1 min. and
- Then walk at an easier
- Pace for 1 min. Repeat
- This cycle 4 or 5 times
- During your walk.

### WEEK 7

- Begin eating fresh
- Vegetables for 1
- Between-meal
- Snack each day.

### WEEK 8

- Start eating 1 meat-
- Less meal with lentils
- Or dried/canned
- Peas/beans weekly.

### WEEK 9

- Begin eating daily
- Breakfasts with at
- Least 1 serving of
- Whole grains and
- 1 fruit or vegetable.

### WEEK 10

- Each day begin
- Choosing low-fat or
- Reduced-fat dairy and
- Condiments over full-
- Fat options.

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**Plan**

Katie Ferraro, MPH, RD, CDE, is a Registered Dietitian, Certified Diabetes Educator and Assistant Clinical Professor of Nutrition at the University of California–San Francisco and the University of San Diego. Blog: www.fiberisthefuture.com.

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<th>WEEK 9</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you want dessert after dinner, begin choosing 1 piece of fruit.</td>
<td>Begin eating fresh vegetables for 1 between-meal snack each day.</td>
<td>Start eating 1 meat-less meal with lentils or dried/canned peas/beans weekly.</td>
<td>Begin eating daily breakfasts with at least 1 serving of whole grains and 1 fruit or vegetable.</td>
<td>Each day begin choosing low-fat or reduced-fat dairy and condiments over full-fat options.</td>
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<tr>
<td>For 3 days, continue walking the same number of steps as in Week 4. After warming up, walk as fast as you can for 1 min. and then walk at an easier pace for 1 min. Repeat this cycle 4 or 5 times during your walk.</td>
<td>For 3 days, walk as in Week 4. For 3 days (same or alternate days), choose at least 4 moves from the TOPS fitness cards*, and do 1 or 2 sets.</td>
<td>For 3 days, walk as in Week 4. For 3 days (same or alternate days), choose 8 moves from the TOPS fitness cards*, and do 1 or 2 sets.</td>
<td>For 3 days, walk as in Week 4. For 3 days (same or alternate days), choose 8 moves from the TOPS fitness cards*, and do 2 or 3 sets.</td>
<td>For 3 days, walk as in Week 4. For 3 days (same or alternate days), choose 8 moves from the TOPS fitness cards*, and do 2 or 3 sets. Afterward, stretch for 5–10 min. (see page 26 in this issue).</td>
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<td>Replace your earlier mantra with a new one beginning this week. When you get dressed, repeat: “May I be safe, may I be happy, may I be healthy.”</td>
<td>Begin eating 1 meal each day with your TV, computer and cellphone turned off. Savor the smell, taste and texture of your food.</td>
<td>Replace your earlier mantra with a new one beginning this week. When you go to bed, say to your body, “Thank you for all you’ve done for me today.”</td>
<td>Twice a week take a mental holiday. Set a timer for 2 min. and imagine yourself in your favorite vacation spot. What do you see, hear and smell?</td>
<td>Begin collecting joy throughout your day, looking for examples of kindness and beauty. Take time to write them down if you wish.</td>
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The TOPS 10 Ways to Regroup After a Setback

At times as you work toward reaching your goal weight, you may get discouraged and feel like giving up, especially if you have a gain. On those days, give these tips a try:

1. Remember how far you’ve come. Pull out an old photo or journal. Or consider: “What was I doing and how was I feeling at this time last year?”

2. Talk to someone who motivates you. Most of us have a cheerleader in our lives—a friend, parent, sibling or TOPS pal. Who’s yours?

3. Forgive yourself for a bad day and move on. Tomorrow is a new day and another chance to get back on track.

4. Do something you love. What cheers you up—fishing, knitting a project for a friend or immersing yourself in a good book, for example?

5. Move. Exercise boosts your mood. Even simply walking your dog around the neighborhood can make you feel better.

6. Laugh. Play your go-to comedy or head to the theater to see the latest funny film and get your mind off your day.

7. Pause to think about your triumphs. How much weight have you already lost? Do your clothes feel looser? Have you been eating more veggies?

8. Put things in perspective and help someone in need. Serve food in a meal program for the homeless or give your time for another worthy cause.

9. Return to what inspires you—your favorite quotes, poems or songs. Let them motivate you to stay the course.

10. Imagine your life after you achieve your goal. Close your eyes and picture yourself: What are you doing? How do you feel?