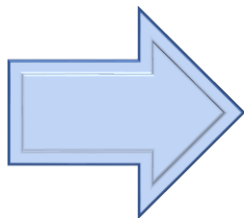


### The Focus Forward Model

Cultivating a life full of health and wellness can be like tending to a vegetable garden. Achieving an abundant crop of vegetables takes planning, time and effort. It requires daily follow-through and consistency: nurturing, watering, weeding, and preventing damage from disease and bugs. After many weeks and months, you begin to reap the harvest from all your planning and consistent efforts.

The same is true of our health and wellness goals. Optimizing health and fitness and preventing illness and chronic disease is only achieved through daily focused efforts and consistency. Nothing worth doing is easy but applying daily focus and effort can yield a bountiful harvest of health!

#### Give Me a Boost: What Motivates You?



In order to begin moving forward and gaining momentum towards achieving your health goals, you are going to need a boost, or a driving force. You need a reason to put in the effort every day and create meaning behind the work.

- **Inspiration** – Identify things that spark you into action. Create a picture board, write down mantras or inspiring quotes, or watch videos that inspire positivity and change.
- **Motivation** – what motivates you to be your best self? Take time to reflect on the WHY.
- **Support from others** – creating a support network is critical to create a driving force for your goals and maintain momentum.
  - *Professional Support* – direct support team, health care professionals, health coach, fitness instructor or personal trainer, therapist, teachers, etc.
  - *Social Support* – mentors, family, friends (personal friends or via social media), support group members

### Step 1: Identify Goals and Potential Barriers

After giving some thought to what drives you to make positive changes in your life, it is time to identify specific goals to work towards

- **Daily Goals** – Setting short-term, achievable goals is essential. Daily habits that seem small add up over time!
  - Examples might be to take your medicine on time every day or to take a 30-minute walk after dinner every evening.
- **Long-Term Goals** – these goals are bigger and require execution of daily goals to achieve. Creating long-term goals is very important to inspire, motivate, and keep you focused.
  - Examples might be to run a 5K Race or lower your blood pressure

Remember with setting goals to keep them SMART:

- **Specific** – “walk for 30 minutes” instead of “do something active”
- **Measurable** – How will I know if I achieved it?
- **Attainable** – make it something you can accomplish
- **Relevant** – work towards something you care about
- **Time-bound** – set a deadline or timeframe for achieving

### Potential Barriers

In the process of setting daily and long-term goals it is helpful to identify potential barriers to progress before you start planning. You may not be able to anticipate every barrier to success, but past experiences and critical thinking will help in the identification of roadblocks that may come your way.

Some examples of potential barriers might be:

- Setting goals that are unrealistic for your lifestyle
- Lack of time to work on goals – too busy with other things
- Lack of knowledge about how to achieve goals
- Doubt – “Can I really do this?”
- Instant gratification
- Family or friends who may not be invested in your growth
- Lack of preparation and planning
- Lack of input from mentors and professionals
- Distractions – things that cause you to lose focus
- All or Nothing mentality

Once you begin to identify potential barriers, you can use that knowledge to adapt planning and preparation to overcome, remove, or work around the obstacles.

## Step 2: Preparation and Planning

Now that you have identified potential barriers, daily goals, and long-term goals, you are ready to prepare and plan for success.

Planning is crucial because without it, you will not have a roadmap to guide your journey each day. Without planning ahead, you will be much more likely to not follow through on your goals. Planning and preparation foster the formation of habits and routines that will keep momentum moving forward.

Planning and preparation can take many forms and should be personalized. Plan a way to track your behavior with a checklist or habit tracker. Examples of planning would be:

- Creating a daily checklist to use on paper or on a smartphone
- Use a habit tracker or bullet journal to write specific goals and keep track of actions
- Setting out clothes and sneakers the night before a morning workout
- Meal Planning – making a menu to guide shopping and cooking
- Batch cooking – taking time to cook meals or parts of meals ahead of time
- Creating a bedtime routine to follow
- Choosing what to eat at a restaurant ahead of time by looking at an online menu
- Deciding what days of the week to exercise and plan what the exercise will be

Planning and preparation make execution and follow-through easier. When faced with multiple choices throughout the day, it is very easy to fall back into your comfort zone and convenience. Planning reduces stress, increases confidence, and allows for greater focus and clarity.



**A GOAL  
WITHOUT A PLAN  
IS JUST A WISH**

### 3. Daily Focus by Tracking Behavior

What we choose to focus on has a profound impact on our attitude, relationships, and wellness. By finding a way to track your behavior and new habits, it allows you to focus on what is most important to you and your health.

Remember that life is unpredictable and there are many things that can cloud our focus or distract us from our goals:

- Negative Self-Talk or thought patterns
- Stress (internal and external stressors)
- Distraction – social media, binge watching shows, scrolling phone
- Disorganization and lack of planning
- Uncontrolled mental health symptoms

Mindfulness can allow us to stay in the moment and reduce these barriers to focus.

#### Practicing Mindfulness



Following through on the short and long-term goals takes daily focus and mindfulness. What is mindfulness exactly? According to writers at *Psychology Today*, mindfulness is “a state of active, open attention to the present.”

**Shown in the diagram above**, mindfulness takes awareness and attention to be in the moment and focus on what is most important to you.

- Remember what you have planned and prepared to make this day successful.
- Remind yourself of your short and long-term goals
- Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and actions
- Allow yourself to be present and aware of your surroundings

## Step 4 – Evaluate Progress – How am I doing?

Taking time to evaluate how things are going will be an essential step to continue moving forward towards your goals. Ask yourself:

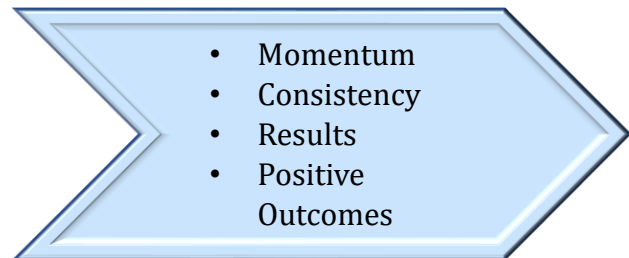
- What has worked well for me?
- What has not worked well for me?
- Have I been able to plan and prepare successfully?
- Am I making measurable progress toward my goals?
- What have I accomplished?
- What barriers have kept me from following through on my action plan?
- Do I need more information?
- Do I need help or input from professional or social supports?

Remember to celebrate accomplishments and always consider how your process can be improved moving forward. Consider writing down your evaluation. Consider sharing your successes and problem areas with your someone you trust (professional or social support).

### ***Repeat the cycle - Step 1 Identify Goals and Potential Barriers***

After some trial and error and experience you are ready to re-evaluate your goals and identify new barriers to overcome moving forward. Take what you have learned and try again.

Soon your daily goals will become habit and part of your normal routine. As you gain momentum you will also gain confidence, clarity, peace of mind, and positive outcomes



## Final Thoughts

- **Balance** - Be cautious of an “all or nothing” mentality. It is easy to become consumed by a set of goals and neglect other areas of your life that are important to you. When setting goals and, planning, and focusing on health, make sure to set boundaries for yourself and keep everything in balance.
- **Rest** – Some days the most important thing you can do for yourself is rest and practice self-care. Some days the most important goals might be to get through the day and practice gratitude. Being focused does not mean pushing yourself to your limits. With mindfulness comes an awareness of the body and mind’s limitations and the need to rest.

- **Spiritual Health** – for many people, spirituality and mindfulness go hand in hand. Practicing meditation or engaging in prayer can help center your mind, focus, and provide a sense of peace and clarity.
- **Keep an Open Mind** – Change can be very difficult. Be open to trying new things and be open to challenges and failure. You cannot succeed if you never try
- **Stay Positive and Have Fun!** – Remember that life is meant to be enjoyed! In every stage of your wellness journey, it is important to reflect on whether what you are doing is positive and bringing joy and satisfaction to your life.

