



SHARON GAM FITNESS

HOW TO SET EFFECTIVE GOALS

by Sharon Gam, PhD

A step-by-step guide to setting goals you'll actually be able to achieve!

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INTRODUCTION



If you want to make meaningful and sustainable improvements in your health, fitness, or wellness, you should be setting goals. Unfortunately, many people who set goals fail to achieve them.

There are no right or wrong ways to set goals, but there is a better, more effective way, which will set you up for success. This workbook will walk you through the process of setting effective goals and creating action plans to achieve them.

This e-book will walk you through the process of setting effective goals. At the end of the book, you'll find worksheets you can use to set your own goals and make your own action plans.

The Two Types Of Goals

The Process vs. The Outcome

There are two types of goals: outcome goals and process goals.

Outcome goals are the end-result you're trying to achieve. An example of an outcome goal is completing a 5km run.

Process goals are the steps you take to achieve your outcome goals. Think of process goals like habits or activities that you build over time.

A process goal could be to go running for at least 20 minutes, 3 times per week. Both types of goals are important, but process goals are your secret weapon for success.



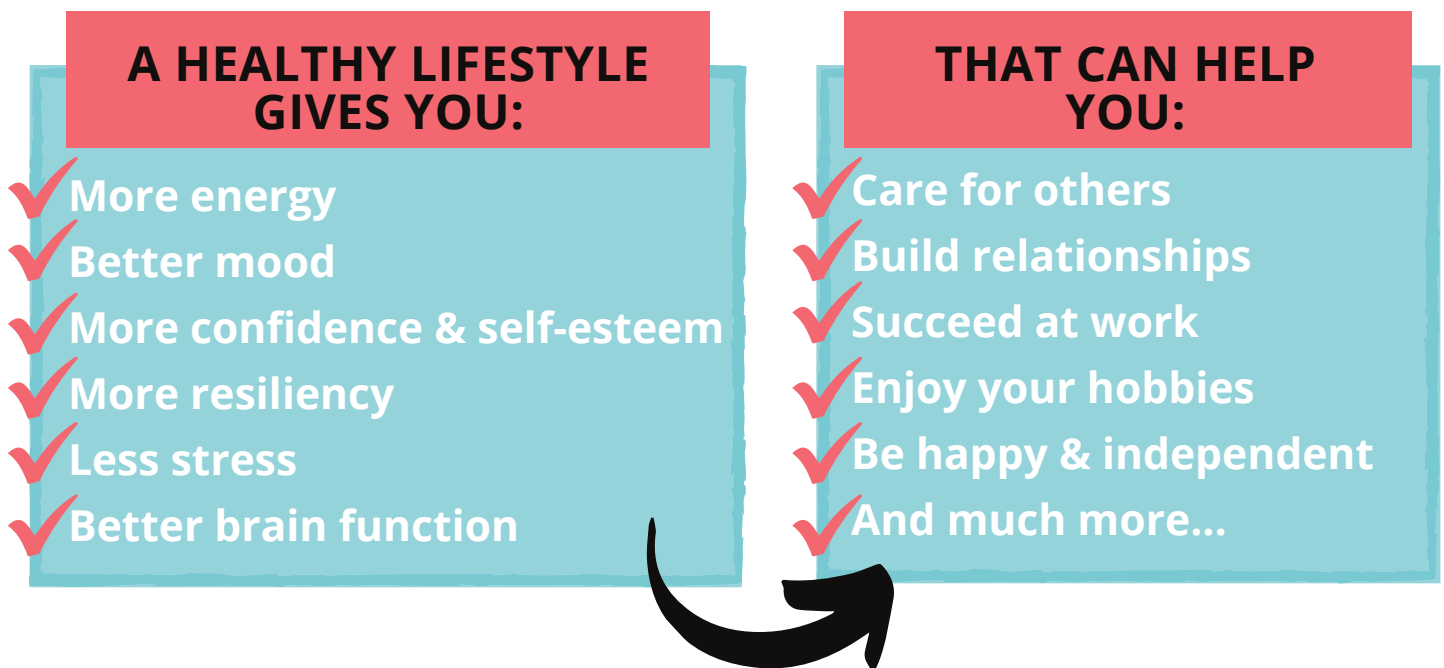
STEP 1

Find Your "Why"

When you first decide to start exercising or go on a healthy eating plan, you probably get a rush of motivation. You might be excited about how good you're going to look or feel once you achieve your goals.

Unfortunately, for most people that motivation fades quickly, and it becomes difficult to stick to your healthy lifestyle.

You need to dig deeper and find meaningful, long-lasting motivation. One way to do that is to think about the things that matter most to you and discover how leading a healthy lifestyle can support those things and help you live your best life every day, not just once you achieve your goals.



Your first step in the goal-setting process will be to do some introspection. Think about the things that you value most and how a healthy lifestyle can support those things.

STEP 2

Decide what you want to achieve. This outcome goal should be specific, measurable, and achievable.

An outcome goal that's too vague doesn't give you the direction you need to create your plans. If your goal isn't measurable, you won't know if or when you've achieved it. A goal that's too difficult or out of reach sets you up for failure and frustration.

EXAMPLE OUTCOME GOALS

- Get strong enough to do a full push up in 3 months
- Complete a 5km run in 16 weeks
- Lose 10 lbs in 10 weeks



STEP 3

Set Process Goals

Good health means being active, eating healthy foods, and taking care of yourself in other aspects of your life.

Specifically, most people should do strength training and cardio several times per week, and move more throughout each day.

Eating more minimally processed foods, less ultra-processed junk foods, less sugar, and smaller portions makes up a solid healthy eating pattern.

For a healthy lifestyle, you could work on getting more sleep, practicing mindfulness to reduce stress, or building relationships by reaching out to family or friends.

Think about what you will need to do every day to achieve your outcome goal, and make a list of those actions. The details will depend on what you're currently doing and your lifestyle and preferences.





EXAMPLE PROCESS GOALS

Exercise

- Strength train 3 times per week
- Cardio 2 times per week
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator at work each day

Healthy Eating

- Eat 1 home-cooked meal each day
- Eat 5 servings of vegetables each day
- Replace daily soda with water each day

Lifestyle

- Take at least 8,000 steps each day
- Get at least 7 hours of sleep each night
- Do a 5 minute deep breathing exercise every morning

STEP 4

Focus On Your Process Goals

Here's the trick: push your outcome goal to the back of your mind and focus on your process goals.

Work on those, week in and week out, and you'll get stronger, fitter, and healthier, but more than that, you'll build some essential skills and develop sustainable habits.

Each time you achieve a process goal of doing a strength workout, for example, you'll have made huge strides towards making regular exercise an automatic part of your lifestyle.

Each time you achieve a process goal of eating a home-cooked meal, you'll have practiced some important cooking skills.

Each time you get 7 hours of sleep, you'll have stacked up a small win and built confidence in your ability to achieve your goals.





STEP 5

Create An Action Plan

Failing to plan is planning to fail. You could set the best goals and have the best workout program and nutrition plan, but if you don't have a detailed strategy for how to follow those programs and plans, you're unlikely to succeed.

The final step in setting effective goals is creating a specific plan to achieve each of your process goals.

Write down **exactly** when, where, and how you will perform your target behavior. Include anything you need to do to prepare.

Also brainstorm any obstacles that might get in your way and strategies to avoid or work around it.

People who make detailed action plans are almost 3 times more likely to follow through.

Milne et al., 2002

EXAMPLE ACTION PLAN

Process Goal: Strength train 3 times per week

- Follow a workout program at the gym on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 5-6 pm
- Arrange for a friend or family member to pick up the kids on those nights
- Put my workouts on my calendar with reminders set for the night before and earlier in the day
- Change into workout clothes at the office and go straight to the gym from work

Process Goal: Eat a home-cooked dinner each day

- Find 3 healthy, quick, and easy dinner recipes and post them on the fridge
- Go to the supermarket on Saturday morning to get ingredients
- Prep ingredients on Sunday to make mid-week cooking faster
- Start cooking at 6:30pm each day, dinner at 7pm

GOAL-SETTING WORKSHEETS

*Now that you know how to
discover your motivation
and set effective goals, use
the following worksheets to
record your "why", outcome
and process goals, and
action plans.*

STEP 1

Find Your "Why"

WORKSHEET

Think about the things (people, activities, experiences, aspirations, etc.) that are important in your life. Consider how your current lifestyle affects those things, and how achieving your goals would impact the most important things in your life.

Also think about how you currently feel and function. Do you have energy to do the things you need to do and the things you love? Can you move without pain or discomfort? Do you feel good about your life?

Think about what it would mean to you and how you would feel if you accomplished your goals.

Take your time and really dig deep here. It's not enough to decide that you want to achieve your goals so that you can improve your health.

Why do you want to improve your health? Is it so that you can feel better or get off your medication? Those desires could stem from a need for more energy or independence. How would leading a healthy lifestyle improve your energy levels or make you more independent?

Do you want to improve your health so you can live a long life and be there for your children and grandchildren as they grow up?

Does that stem from a need to take care of your family? If so, how would leading a healthy lifestyle affect your ability to take care of your family?

How would leading a healthy lifestyle set a good example for them and help them be healthier as well?

How would reducing stress by being active help you interact better with your family and foster a meaningful relationship with them?

Keep asking why until you get to the deepest, most meaningful motivation you can think of.



STEP 1

Find Your "Why"

WORKSHEET

1. What do you value most in your life? Family, friends, happiness, hobbies, success, health, etc.

2. What do you want to accomplish in your life? Raise your kids to be healthy and happy, be successful in your work, have meaningful friendships and relationships, etc.

3. How does your current lifestyle affect the things you value most and the things you want to accomplish?

STEP 1

Find Your "Why"

WORKSHEET

4. How would leading a healthier lifestyle support the things you value most?

5. How would leading a healthier lifestyle help you live your best life each day?

STEP 2

Set An Outcome Goal

WORKSHEET

Choose an outcome goal that you want to achieve.

Also think about why you chose this particular goal. What does it mean to you? How does it affect the things you value most in your life.

Outcome Goal:

	Yes	No
Is your goal as specific as possible?	☐	☐

Is your goal realistic and achievable?	☐	☐
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Does your goal align with the things you value most in your life?	☐	☐
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How does your goal support those things?

How will you measure your progress?

STEP 3

Set Process Goal

WORKSHEET

Write out several actions that you will need to take each day (or several times per week) to achieve your outcome goal. Be as specific as possible. Use the Process Goals Menus for ideas.

Exercise

STEP 3

Set Process Goal

WORKSHEET

Healthy Eating

Lifestyle

EXERCISE PROCESS GOAL MENU



Sample Process Goals

Do Cardio

- Do three 30 minute cardio workouts per week
- Take a 10 minute walk at lunch each day

Get Stronger

- Do 3 strength workouts per week
- Practice a few reps of a strength exercise every 3 hours

Increase Fitness

- Do 2 high intensity workouts per week
- Increase cardio distance or time by 10% each week

Performance Goal

- E.g. Complete a 5Km run
- E.g. Do a full push up or pull up
- *Specific to your performance goal

Improve Core Strength

- Practice core activation for 1 minute every hour
- Do 1 core strength exercise every day

Recover Better

- Use a foam roller for 10 minutes each day
- Do a 5 minute stretch and cool down after each workout

Improve Mobility

- Do a 1 minute stretch sequence each day
- Do a stretch after every time you go to the bathroom

HEALTHY EATING PROCESS GOAL MENU



Sample Process Goals

Eat More Mindfully

- Track your intake
- Find out why you eat what you eat
- Don't eat if you're not hungry

Balance Your Meals

- Eat a source of fiber, healthy fat, and lean protein in each dinner

Eat More Vegetables and Fruits

- Eat a veggie/fruit with lunch every day
- Eat 5 servings of veggies/fruit each day

Plan and Prep Meals

- Prep 1 meal each day
- Create a weekly meal plan

Reduce Added Sugars

- Replace 1 daily soda with water
- Replace sugary cereal with homemade granola

Reduce Portion Sizes

- Put half your meal away before you start eating
- Only eat pre-measured portions

Drink More Water

- Drink 64 ounces of water each day
- Take a sip of water every time you get an email

Eat More Whole Grains

- Switch from white rice to brown rice
- Try a new whole grain side dish

Cook More at Home

- Eat 2 home-cooked meals/snacks each day

Reduce Sodium

- Make a homemade version of a salty processed food like pasta sauce or stock

LIFESTYLE PROCESS GOAL MENU



Sample Process Goals

Move More Throughout Each Day

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator every day
- Do 2 squats every hour

Manage Stress

- Do 5 minutes of deep breathing every day
- Make a list of your stress triggers and a plan to avoid each one

Sit Less

- Get up from your chair every 2 hours
- Stand up to take every phone call throughout the day

Sleep Better

- Disconnect from electronic devices an hour before bed every night
- Go to bed at 10 pm each night

Be More Mindful

- Practice mindfulness for 10 minutes every morning
- Pay attention to your surroundings every time you stop at a traffic light

Improve Relationships

- Spend 30 minutes playing with your kids each day
- Eat dinner as a family without any electronic devices each night



STEP 4

Focus On Your Process Goal

WORKSHEET

Your process goals will be your keys to success. Prioritize them, and plan to achieve them in the next step.

“Mastering the process is the real goal, because that’s what sets you up for a lifetime of success.”

STEP 5

Create An Action Plan

WORKSHEET

Take a few minutes to think about your daily routine and lifestyle. What obstacles will prevent you from reaching each of your process goals? Common obstacles include lack of time, lack of support, and lack of knowledge.

Next think about your resources. Do you have a supportive family member who can help free up some time for you two or three days per week? Do you have free time on the weekend when you could cook large batches of healthy food?

Then think of ways in which you can use your resources to overcome your obstacles.

Use the "Action Plan" templates on the following pages to put together your weekly action plans.



SAMPLE ACTION PLAN



Exercise



Healthy Eating



Lifestyle

Week starting (date):

6/15/20

This week I will (target behavior):

Do a strength workout

on (days):

Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday

at (time):

6pm Tuesday and Thursday, 9am Saturday

in (place):

gym

To make sure I follow through on my plan, I will:

Pack my gym bag the night before and bring it to work with me.

Change into gym clothes before I leave work.

Cook large batches of dinner the night before so there are leftovers ready and I don't have to cook on Tuesday and Thursday nights.

Reward myself with a nice bath only on the nights I do my strength workout.

Confidence: 8/10

MY ACTION PLAN

☐ **Exercise**

☐ **Healthy Eating**

☐ **Lifestyle**

Week starting (date):

This week I will (target behavior):

on (days):

at (time):

in (place):

To make sure I follow through on my plan, I will:

Confidence: /10

MY ACTION PLAN

☐ **Exercise**

☐ **Healthy Eating**

☐ **Lifestyle**

Week starting (date):

This week I will (target behavior):

on (days):

at (time):

in (place):

To make sure I follow through on my plan, I will:

Confidence: /10

MY ACTION PLAN

☐ **Exercise**

☐ **Healthy Eating**

☐ **Lifestyle**

Week starting (date):

This week I will (target behavior):

on (days):

at (time):

in (place):

To make sure I follow through on my plan, I will:

Confidence: /10

ABOUT ME



Sharon Gam, PhD

Personal Trainer and Strength Coach

I earned my PhD in exercise physiology from the University of Western Australia, and am a Certified Strength and Conditioning Coach and Certified Health Coach. In my more than 14 years of experience in the fitness industry, I've worked in many different roles and gained expertise in coaching, exercise science, and behavior change.

I specialize in helping busy, professional women build strength and confidence and achieve happier and healthier lives!

I know that achieving your goals isn't easy. I can help! **Contact me today** to find out about personalized, one-on-one coaching options!

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