

Mastering motivation in type 2 diabetes



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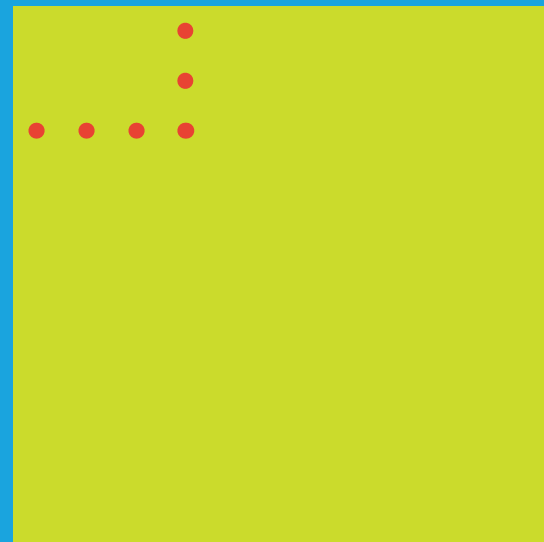
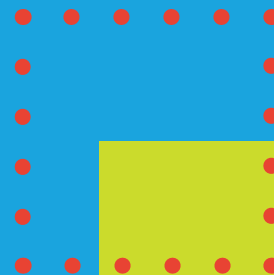
This article has been produced by AstraZeneca in collaboration with Dr Jen Nash, a Clinical Psychologist Chartered with the British Psychological Society.

Introduction

Motivation matters when it comes to type 2 diabetes (T2D). People who are highly motivated to make healthy lifestyle changes are much more likely to achieve good health and take control of their condition.

However, it can be difficult to find the motivation to do something if the immediate costs appear to outweigh the benefits; working up a sweat feels uncomfortable and eating a piece of fruit instead of a chocolate

bar feels boring. If you feel like you are struggling with motivation, then follow the top tips in this article to help you take action and live a healthier life with T2D.



Plan for success

Setting goals is a crucial part of making any change in your life. Making a good action plan that fits easily into your life is the key to staying motivated and achieving your goals. To help you with goal setting, you can use the **SMART** process:

S

SPECIFIC A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. A general goal would be “I want to lose weight”, whilst a specific goal would state “I want to lose 8kg by joining a gym and exercising three times a week”

M

MEASURABLE It’s important to establish concrete criteria to measure your progress. Use weighing scales or body measurements to monitor your weight loss, or log how far you have walked using a pedometer or a smartphone app. By measuring your progress, you can clearly see your achievements, which provides encouragement and motivation to stay on track.

A

ATTAINABLE Your goal needs to be achievable. Setting a goal that is impossible to accomplish will only dampen your motivation. If your goal is to lose a specific amount of weight, you might need to consult with your healthcare team to confirm that your goal is feasible. If you have a lot of weight to lose, you might need to break down your overall goal into smaller, more manageable steps. Remember that you can always review and update your goals as you progress.

R

RELEVANT It is important that you choose a relevant goal that matters to you. Consider your current circumstances and evaluate whether your goal fits in around your life. If your goal is to go the gym three times a week, but there isn’t a gym close by, then a more relevant goal could be to go for a walk or jog around your local park.

T

TIME-BOUND To help maintain your momentum, you should decide on a deadline by which you want to achieve your goal. You might want to set a goal for a significant event, like a birthday, holiday or wedding. Remember, it’s important to be patient and take things slowly, so try to be flexible and realistic with your deadlines.

Make healthy behaviours more enjoyable

Healthy behaviours don't have to be boring; you can still have fun along the way! If you find it hard to summon up the motivation to complete a specific activity, then try linking it to an activity that you love. By doing this, you can reinforce your healthy behaviour by making it more appealing. Some strategies might include:

- If you love music, then create a playlist of your favourite upbeat songs to listen to whilst you exercise
- If you want to catch up on your favourite TV programme, you could watch it whilst you are on the treadmill or cycling machine at the gym
- If you enjoy reading, download an audiobook to keep you entertained whilst you exercise or cook a healthy dinner
- If you enjoy socialising with friends, then ask them to exercise with you. You could motivate each other to join an exercise class or go for a walk at the local park



Reward yourself

It's important to reward yourself along the way by acknowledging your success and celebrating your achievements, no matter how small. This will allow you to focus on bite-sized, tangible goals that help you to stay motivated and achieve your ultimate goal. Remember to choose a reward that won't undo all of your hard work! Some suggestions are listed below:

- Go on a day trip with a friend
- Plan a holiday
- Buy yourself something new
- Reward yourself with something that will bring you closer to achieving your overall goal, like a new pair of running shoes or a blender to make healthy smoothies and sauces



Keep your goal in mind

Making change can be difficult. At times, it might feel like your goal is taking too long or the results aren't happening quickly enough, and this can make it tempting to stray off track. If you feel like this, use the following strategies:

- Try to imagine how you are going to feel when you accomplish your goal, and the positive effect that it will have on your health
- Use a photo, picture or object that symbolises the importance of your goal



Monitor your progress

Remember to monitor your progress to acknowledge your success along the way. You could:

- Use a mobile app or wearable technology to track your activity throughout the day
- Keep a healthy food diary
- Make the invisible visible by measuring your blood glucose regularly. For example measure your blood glucose before and after exercise. This will allow you to develop an idea of what self-management strategies work for you. HbA1c levels are also a good indicator of how well you are managing your condition

Make a small change every week

Small steps can sometimes seem insignificant when you have lots of changes to make. However, small changes are easier to accomplish, and they point you in the right direction without making you feel out of your comfort zone. Try to make a small change every week, and before you know it, you will be well on your way to achieving your overall goal. If you are trying to lose weight, some small changes might include:

- Skipping the biscuit you usually have alongside your mid-morning coffee, or swapping it for a piece of fruit
- Bringing a healthy home-made lunch to work instead of eating out
- Getting off the bus a stop earlier than normal
- Drinking a glass of water with every meal

Remind yourself of previous success

If you feel like you are struggling, then remind yourself of the successes that you have achieved in the past. Think about the wealth of knowledge and skills that you have developed throughout your lifetime, and consider how you can transfer this experience to achieve your current goal. To help you, you could:

- Keep a journal to log your previous successes
- Complete the **peak exercise** to visualise your previous successes. Draw a mountain range, and assign your accomplishments to each of the mountain peaks

Get support

People who successfully reach their goals are far more likely to have told their friends and family about their intentions. Whilst keeping your goals private can help you avoid feeling foolish if you don't manage to accomplish them, it also makes it very tempting to avoid making healthy changes, and as a result, you return to old habits. Your friends and family can also help you achieve your goals by offering encouragement and moral support when you are struggling.

You are now equipped with practical tips to help you master motivation and reap the long-term benefit of healthy change. Make a change today, no matter how small, and start your journey to a better future.

- *Dr. Jen Nash is a Clinical Psychologist living with diabetes, and Chartered with the British Psychological Society. She helps her clients find solutions with simple and highly-effective mindset strategies to gain freedom from the frustration and stress of living with T2D.*

