

Are you ready to take better care of your body? Not fanatically, but sensibly?

Doing so requires a solid plan to improve your eating and exercising habits. After reading this, please devote time to examining your inner desires, and record these on the attached sheet.

Again, do not do this now, but first read these first four pages; immediately thereafter fill out the form on which you will list the following:

1. Your specific and measurable goals?
2. Reasons — many reasons — why your goal is important?
3. An affirming statement of your goal and your reason it's important.
4. Actions steps necessary to achieving your goal(s).

A goal (1) might be to lose weight, but a specific and measurable goal would be to shed eight pounds of body fat within six weeks. A reason why this is important (2) is that excess fat is zapping energy and risking your health, reducing productivity and vibrancy of life. An affirming statement might be (3) *"In order to reach my full potential, I will master sensible dietary and exercise habits, shedding eight pounds within the next six weeks."* The action steps necessary (4) are: two-time-per-week maximum-intensity workouts, plus superhydration ( $\frac{1}{2}$  body weight in ounces of water), plus light activity after my evening meal, plus planning, assessing and recording every meal and snack daily for six weeks.

Again, do not fill out this form until studying the rest of this article.

### A Clear Vision

In the Bible, God told Habakuk to "write the vision plain on tablets" (Habakuk 2:2) and we're also told that "without vision the people perish."

Our lives are a mixture of elements. Projects we choose to undertake cost us time, attention, energy, and perhaps require a direct monetary investment. It's important to assess the potential payoff as well as all the cost, determining the prize at what price.

### Take Responsibility

Psychologists tell us that people enter "diet" programs because they provide a ready excuse. Failure to attain goals is blamed onto the program. This may be true, but it ignores the initial responsibility ... that of making sure you're committing to a course of action that is sensible and sound.

Pick a worthwhile endeavor to pour effort into. Then, commit yourself to it – every prescribed aspect of it. Unfortunately, 80% commitment does not assure 80% results. Degree of effectiveness increases exponentially as you approach 100% compliance.

### The Customization Caveat

We also know from research that those who trim down and stay that way generally have their own compilation of strategies to thank. This is frequently an evolution from a pre-packaged program with which they started.

Eventually, you're going to restructure these elements into something uniquely your own, synthesized from this resource and perhaps others.

But first, apply yourself to a prescribed, proven program. Study it.

God says to “trust not in your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5), advice that works well for beginning trainees. Admit that you need help.

## Lie to Yourself?

The Bible says to “take no thought, saying...” (Matthew 6:31). How do you take a thought? By saying.

We all talk to ourselves. The more emotionally stable of us do so inaudibly.

What we say influences events and outcomes of our lives. Interestingly, we can lie to ourselves. At least up to a point, we can get our subconscious to perform a powerful overhaul on our expectations.

Okay, we really don't mean lie, but make a suggestion to yourself, perhaps one that stretches what your conscious mind can readily accept. I saw the power of suggestion manifest itself dramatically once during a seminar on cardiac risk factors — a man in the third row had a heart attack.

Why not suggest something that propels us in a positive direction?

*I am on my way to a fit, trim body!  
I will discipline myself to eat sensibly.  
I will give every ounce of effort to my workouts.*

Thoughts lead to action and action to results. Over the long-term, however, this cycle will conform to our self-image. We even sabotage our own best interests, stooping to a self-image that is below where it could be.

This is a little tricky.

In the case of people who are not taking good care of themselves, they're comfortable because their unfit condition is consistent with how they see themselves. But external stimuli

arouse impulses to get into better shape. Their psychological comfort waivers. The benefits of exercise and/or the consequences of not exercising trigger thoughts contrary to their unfit self-image. At some point, in response to these new thoughts, people begin to change their actions, and start to see some new results.

But the new result has taken the person out of their comfort zone; thus their mind begins looking for ways to get back into a situation where their results live down to their self-image. The quickest way back to being comfortable is usually to stop taking positive actions.

The bible says to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” It says to ‘put off the old man and put on the new.’ This can apply physically as well as spiritually.

## Training the Mind

I'm not sure who counted, but I understand we typically experience 50,000 or more thoughts per day. These don't just happen; they're triggered by what we experience. Many times it can be a recent stimulus that re-ignites an emotional event of the past.

Motivational speakers earn their honorariums by inspiring positive outlooks and grand visions. The Biblical Proverbs tell us that “As a man thinks in his heart, so does he become.”

Don't just let thoughts happen; program them. Read informative and inspiring books and articles. Talk to uplifting friends (who can be created by you uplifting them). Deluge your mind with positive input, or as the Bible says:

*“...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”*

— Philemon 4:8

## The Self Exam

Before filling out the goals form, please get with a close friend or family member who can assist your self-examination. The self exam consists of a series of verbal promptings. Your friend has to apply this prompt repeatedly for at least one minute. It's repeated after every one of your responses to the statement:

My reasons for being healthy and fit are:

You might say: "To wear my good clothes."

Friend says: "So that what?"

You say: "So that I look stunning."

"So that what?"

"So that I feel better about myself."

"So that what?"

"So that I improve my disposition."

"So that what?"

"So that I'm more patient with the kids."

"So that what?"

"There'll be greater harmony in my home."

"So that what?"

"We can all be happier."

I'm sure you get it. We're digging deeply into your innermost desires. Record them. We want to make you conscious of why you really want to improve in these areas.

Identify your depth of purpose. As you begin this new endeavor, obstacles will arise. Your reason(s) must be bigger than your obstacle.

Once you develop a strong self-image of a healthy fit person, you'll look for ways to maintain it. At times if you are not exercising

and eating well you will look for ways to get back on track. This is the exact opposite of what someone with a self-image of an unfit person does. If they are exercising and eating well, their sub-conscious mind is actually looking for ways to get them to stop!

EXAMPLE: *If a person changes their thoughts from "I don't have time to exercise" to "No matter how busy I get I find the time for exercise", it will eventually affect their self-image. The new self-image is what will lead to the creative ideas for how to find the time. The ideas are followed by the action of exercising and the result of being more healthy and fit. The new result matches the new self-image. Simple, but not easy.*

## Affirmations

An affirmation is a statement that creates a vivid, crystal clear image of your goal as if it had already been achieved. Basketball teams cut down the net *before* a championship game. This sets their minds on the feel of victory. Effective affirmations should meet the following criteria:

1. Starts with "I am"
2. Positive
3. Short and specific
4. Includes an action word
5. Includes a feeling word

After establishing your goal, write a statement that meets all five criterion and creates a vivid, crystal clear image in your mind of the goal as if it had already been achieved.

EXAMPLE: *"I am proudly looking at myself in the mirror wearing my size 3 pants."*

Read your affirmation(s) at least three times per day. Whenever possible, read your

affirmations at quiet contemplative times. Continue to use your affirmations for an extended period of time. Sometimes you will see immediate results, and other times it will take awhile.

Use multiple affirmations for you fitness and life goals, but limit the number to no more than 8-10 affirmations at any given time. It is OK to change your affirmations at any time. Use whatever works for you to create a vivid picture.

### **Persistent Patience**

It takes time. Many times you are working on creating a picture of something you have never before experienced, so it is difficult to visualize. Your visualization is competing with years of personal history. When you first start repeating the statements, chances are your internal reaction will be, “*yeah, right!*” Remember, it helps to *lie* to yourself.

### **From Discipline to Delight**

To exercise regularly throughout life, you must reach the point where the only thing worse than working out is *not* working out. Propel yourself from discipline to delight. Somewhere, generally occurring between six months and one year of consistent training, your body will begin craving the after-glow of a potent training session. Perhaps it’s an endorphin release, adrenalin fix, or a satisfying psycho something or other – but you can’t live without this exhilaration ... eventually.

**Please fill out your Goals on the separate sheets accompanying this workbook.**

**1. My specific and measurable goal(s)?**

\_\_\_\_\_ *by* \_\_\_\_\_  
*date*

\_\_\_\_\_ *by* \_\_\_\_\_  
*date*

\_\_\_\_\_ *by* \_\_\_\_\_  
*date*

\_\_\_\_\_ *by* \_\_\_\_\_  
*date*

\_\_\_\_\_ *by* \_\_\_\_\_  
*date*

\_\_\_\_\_ *by* \_\_\_\_\_  
*date*

\_\_\_\_\_ *by* \_\_\_\_\_  
*date*

\_\_\_\_\_ *by* \_\_\_\_\_  
*date*

**2. Reasons — many reasons — why my goal is important?**

Take approximately 1 minute to probe deeply

\_\_\_\_\_ *So that what?*

\_\_\_\_\_ *So that what?*

\_\_\_\_\_ *So that what?*

\_\_\_\_\_ *So that what?*

\_\_\_\_\_ *So that what?*

\_\_\_\_\_ *So that what?*

### 3. Obstacles and Action Steps:

What (specifically) keeps you from achieving your goals? AND what will you do about it (action steps)? (list at least 3 specific obstacles):

*OBSTACLE*

*ACTION STEP*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### 4. Affirming statement:

(Copy onto index card, also, for daily recitation)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---