



In setting goals for losing weight, get real, stay real

It's that time of year when people set goals to lose weight and get healthy. There are literally thousands of options that all promise to transform your body into your favorite superhero. But do these options really provide the benefits of long-term health and living an active lifestyle for years to come?

Weight management is like many other types of management. Success requires adequate planning and consistent follow-through. Although random success does happen, it is more the exception than the rule.

With management in mind, consider packaging your weight management efforts within the concept of SMART goals.

Proposed years ago for project design and management, the SMART mnemonic stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resource-driven and Time-bound.

1. **Specific:** It is much easier to achieve any goal if you have a clear picture of the goal. Although a specific weight goal might seem logical, be careful. It can make more sense to set goals that are clearly attainable and maintainable. For example, consider setting goals

to improve fitness and eat a more wholesome diet.

2. **Measureable:** Determine how you will measure success and stay on track. This could involve setting goals to walk a specific number of minutes per day or per week. Similarly, it could include a goal to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day along with wholesome foods from all the other food groups.

3. **Achievable:** This concept is all about finding the right balance for you. What's reasonable for one person might not be for another.

For example, for some individuals, setting a goal to complete the Honolulu Marathon in December could be an achievable goal for the year. For others, completing the 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) Honolulu Marathon Race Day Walk would be a more rational achievable goal. So be realistic with yourself and set an achievable goal.

4. **Resource-driven:** All goals require resources of some sort. For fitness and weight management, the most precious resource can be time. Finding ways to schedule the time necessary for regular physical activity is critical. It can help to join one of the many training pro-

grams available in town. There are several, and they all vary in ways that might or might not fit your needs and desires. Shop around and talk to people in the programs to find the best fit.

If completing the marathon is your goal, you might want to consider the free marathon clinic that meets Sunday mornings. If being left to your own devices the rest of the week puts you at excessive couch-potato risk, consider programs that meet more often.

5. **Time-bound:** No matter what, it takes time for the human body to change. Whether you are attempting to build strength, develop endurance or just lose weight, it can take months to do it in a way that will have long-term beneficial results.

This is why the marathon clinic starts in March — nine months before the race. To achieve marathon-level fitness without injuring the body requires nearly a year for most people.

As a general rule, fitness goals are more achievable than weight-loss goals. Also, fitness-associated weight loss is more likely to be maintained.

Joannie Dobbs, PhD, CNS and Alan Titchenal, PhD, CNS
are nutritionists in the Department of Human Nutrition, Food and Animal Sciences,
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, UH-Manoa.
Dr. Dobbs also works with the University Health Service.
