



Building habits & using energy!

- Gradual behaviour changes for sustainability long term.
- Consistency with daily habits rather than short term perfection.
- Daily movement, keeping active and building an exercise habit.
- Daily Energy Expenditure and how it's made up.
- Weekday and weekend behaviours.

A proven strategy for achieving sustainable long-term health and weight goals is to make gradual changes to your behaviour and implement consistent daily habits.

Set SMART Goals – rather than thinking about your end point or end goal, think of a journey of small steps, 1-2 lbs per week adds up over time.

Change one habit at a time – don't try to overhaul your lifestyle all at once. For example, add more vegetables or fruit at one meal, then add to further meals. Then you could focus on drinking more water daily.

Focus on your daily habits rather than the outcome – choose habits in line with your goals such as healthier eating or regular exercise. Work on implementing these habits consistently. A 15-minute regular daily walk is better than an inconsistent hour-long gym session. Build habits up over time!

Track Progress – keep a food diary, log activity, keep a journal and look at how you are progressing over time. Celebrate 'small wins' like regularly hitting a daily step goal or consistently eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables daily.

Make changes sustainable – choose activities that you enjoy and will be able to stick to long term, such as dancing, a group exercise class, a game of tennis. Something that you enjoy, is good fun and doesn't feel like exercise will be way easier to continue long term, than something you have to force yourself to do!

Have a support system – share your goals with family and friends to help you stay accountable. Have an exercise buddy, join groups or communities with similar health and wellbeing goals.

Be patient – lasting change takes time. There will be setbacks, plan for them, learn from them and keep moving forwards with the journey rather than giving up entirely.

Layer in small changes gradually to enable you to stick with them, turn your short-term efforts into a sustainable healthy lifestyle. Be Consistent rather than occasionally perfect!

Focussing on consistency is one of the most effective strategies for building daily habits that will lead to long term health and weight changes.

Shift your Mindset:

Accept that you will not always meet your goals perfectly and that is ok! Missing one day or having a slice of cake doesn't wipe out all your efforts. It is having the ability to stick to your daily habits most of the time, it is the series of small daily habits we stick to on most days consistently, that will help us achieve our goals long term. Think of your habits as a long-term investment!

Start Small and Build Momentum:

Choose small manageable actions, in line with your goals, that you can repeat daily and build confidence that you are able to achieve these small actions consistently. For example, 30 minutes of daily exercise may sound unmanageable. Try 'exercise snacks' a proven strategy to help build an exercise habit. Do 10 minutes of exercise and do it 3 times spread throughout the day, achieving your exercise goal in bite size chunks.

Focus on Identity Based Habits:

Think of your goal of who you want to become, e.g. healthy and active, then align your habits with who you want to become. Anchoring your habits and actions to your identity makes that identity feel more natural and your habits more sustainable.

Use the 'NEVER MISS TWICE' Rule:

Life may get in the way, and you might skip a day but commit to never missing 2 days in a row. Bounce back and continue from where you left off, remain consistent.

Create non-negotiables:

Have habits you would not be willing to give up even on a hard day or a minimum version of a habit you can do even when life gets in the way. For example, if you're too tired to exercise, could you do 5 minutes of stretching? Consistency keeps the habit going even if it is not perfect.

Track Progress:

Writing down what you are doing in a journal or habit tracker shows how consistent you are. Then celebrating streaks of consistency or small wins helps you build your confidence and helps with motivation. Reward yourself with something enjoyable as a treat – don't use food related rewards!

Remove Obstacles and Keep things Simple:

Have healthy snacks in the house, leave your exercise clothes out the night before, take your gym bag to work. Make things as easy as possible.

Stack a new habit onto an existing habit. The behaviour patterns are already in place and it makes the new habit easier to adopt. For example, I will take my gym bag to work and go to the gym on my way home.

Accept Slow Progress:

Real change happens gradually, there are no successful, long term quick fixes. Showing up daily is what will reward you long term, way more valuable than drastic short-term efforts. Small habits repeated daily compound over time!

When you prioritise your daily habits, even if you only make small changes, you create a behaviour framework that becomes second nature. Over time, these actions repeated consistently WILL lead to lasting results, rather than yo-yoing backwards and forwards, achieving nothing with short term perfection.

Being Active and Building an Exercise Habit:

To increase your activity levels and build up an exercise habit to include daily movement into your lifestyle and routine, start off gradually and build on your activity levels over time.

Ways to increase your activity levels and build an exercise habit that sticks:

Start with small achievable goals:

If the thought of becoming more active overwhelms you, begin with just 5-10 minutes of daily activity and do that consistently. Once that becomes a regular habit increase how long you are active for and then you can make your activities more challenging. For example, you may start with a short walk which can become longer and brisker over time as you get used to it. You could do some stretching or yoga or some simple bodyweight exercises.

Choose activities you enjoy:

Enjoying what you do will make it easier to stick to long term. Try new activities and see what you like and what is fun to do.

Make movement and activity a daily habit:

Stack your activity onto an existing habit or routine, e.g having a walk after lunch or dinner. Make movement a non-negotiable part of your day!

Plan-ahead:

Think of your activity or exercise as an appointment and schedule time for it in your diary.

Set reminders so you don't forget. Lay your exercise clothing out the night before and exercise first thing or take them to work with you.

Make moving easy:

Park further from the door to increase your step count. Get off the bus or train a stop earlier and walk a little further. Use the stairs rather than the lift. Don't flop down onto the sofa or chair, lower yourself slowly and stand back up without using your hands to help you, a sneaky way to add in a few squats! Aim to move for 5-10 minutes every hour!

Have a support network or an exercise buddy:

Have people round about you to support you, keep you accountable and to help you become more active. Join a group exercise class to make exercise more fun, attend with a friend so you're more likely to go along.

Focus on progressing, not perfection:

Have fun, build your confidence, get better at your chosen activity and make it a consistent habit. If you miss a day, don't feel stressed just make sure you get back to it next time. Build up what you're doing, do it for longer or make it feel a bit harder. The main thing is you start to become consistently more active.

Include variety:

Try different activities or exercises to stop you feeling bored. Try different routes if you are out walking. Choose a hill to make walking harder. Try a different type of group exercise class to challenge yourself.

Reward yourself:

Be proud of your achievements and doing them consistently rather than worrying about performance. If you can stick to your habit for a week have a wee treat (not food based). If you remain consistent for a month have a slightly bigger reward such as a massage or spa treatment or new exercise clothing. Choose something that will help keep you motivated.

Focus on how you are feeling:

Do you have more energy, improved sleep, better mood or reduced stress levels? What positive changes are you noticing? Positive changes are great for motivation! By building habits slowly and making them consistent and enjoyable you will gradually build activity as a habit that becomes a natural and rewarding part of your lifestyle.

Total Daily Energy Expenditure (TDEE):

Is the total amount of energy your body uses in a day.

It is made up from 4 main components:

Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)

The energy your body uses each day for basic functions such as breathing, heart beating, blood circulation and regulating body temperature. It accounts for around 60-70% of our daily energy expenditure. Body composition affects our BMR, the more muscle we have the more energy our body utilises at rest.

Thermic Effect of Food (TEF)

The energy your body uses each day to digest, absorb and metabolize food. It accounts for around 10-15% of our daily energy expenditure. Protein has the highest TEF (20-30% of the calories in protein are burned during its digestion).

Exercise Activity

Thermogenesis (EAT)

The energy your body uses each day for all structured physical movement, such as running or weightlifting. It accounts for around 5-10% of our daily energy expenditure.

Non-exercise Activity

Thermogenesis (NEAT)

The energy your body uses each day from daily activities such as walking, fidgeting, cleaning the house, gardening, DIY or standing. It accounts for around 15-20% of our daily energy expenditure.

You can Increase Daily Energy Expenditure by:

- Exercising – strength training, cardio.
- Include more NEAT activities – don't sit, keep moving! Walk, take the stairs, do some housework, DIY or gardening. Keep moving, increase your step count and your daily calorie burn.
- Boost your BMR – build muscle through resistance training. Pick up those weights and maintain a healthy body composition!
- Boost TEF – include more lean protein (e.g. chicken, fish, eggs) in your diet.

Weekdays and Weekends:

- Having looked at TDEE, depending on our goals we need to consider our energy intake.
- If we consume more energy than our body uses, we will gain weight.
- If we consume the same amount of energy as our body uses our weight stays the same.
- If we consume less energy than our body uses, we will lose weight.

The amount of energy we consume can be the same amount each day or we can spread our intake through the week.

Many people will eat a bit more at the weekend, it is fine to eat a little less (within reason, prioritize your health) during the week, done sensibly this flexible way of eating can work really well.

Weekdays:

Structure and routine, eating habits and exercise habits are more consistent. Energy intake is often lower as meals are planned and there is less time to snack and indulge. Alcohol is less likely to be drunk.

Weekends:

Rules are relaxed, there are often social events, eating out, drinking alcohol and eating comfort foods which results in more energy being consumed. Physical activity may be lower, lounging about and sitting watching TV or socializing without movement leads to a drop in energy being utilised too.

THE PROBLEM - for many people!

The Weekend Effect:

The increase in weekend calories compared to weekdays, can offset any calorie deficit created during the week, slowing the progress of weight loss, making maintenance of weight difficult or can cause an increase in weight leading to weight gain over time.

Strategies to Balance Weekday and Weekend Calories:

Weekdays:

- Stick to a routine – plan meals and snacks, avoid skipping meals or overeating.
- Prioritize movement and activity – walking, scheduled workouts.
- Avoid over restriction – don't drastically cut midweek calories for a weekend binge!

Weekends:

- Plan ahead – look at menus before you eat out and choose sensibly. Choose a balanced meal, including protein, fibre and healthy fats.
- Limit liquid calories –from sugary drinks and alcohol. Drink water between alcoholic beverages.
- Keep active – plan a walk or hike, play sport or cycle. Do DIY, housework or gardening.
- Enjoy treats in moderation – choose one or two treats to indulge on, rather than overeat throughout the day.
- Monitor weekly calorie trends – if you're struggling to lose weight, journal or track on an App to see where the extra calories are coming from.

- Balance weekly energy – add an extra workout midweek, create a small daily midweek deficit. Create a consistent healthy routine most of the time to allow for more weekend flexibility without derailing progress.

If weekend behaviours are still stalling progress, look for behaviour patterns such as emotional eating, boredom or peer pressure especially at social events. Reflect on your current behaviours and make adjustments to align weekday and weekend habits for a more balanced approach.

An increased awareness of WEEKLY CALORIE TRENDS will provide flexibility for more enjoyment at weekends, while still enabling you to achieve your health, wellbeing and weight goals.

NOTES