

# Realistic Fitness Goals for 2023

It's a new year, and many of us have made New Year's resolutions. We start the year off with the best of intentions. We have our goals set, we have a plan, and we are ready to make the new year better than the year before. But somewhere around February, we start to run into scheduling conflicts, and by March, we've forgotten all about our resolutions. It doesn't have to be that way, though. The key is to set achievable and sustainable goals.

## Pump the brakes on over-achieving

We live in a society that praises and encourages over-achieving so much that we tend to forget what is normal. One of the positive after-effects of the pandemic was the realization that we can, and should, slow down. We don't have to do it all today. Keep this in mind when setting your fitness goals. While you may want to make significant changes in your health, setting a series of small goals is the best path to success. It is much easier to maintain an exercise schedule a couple of days a week than to try and go from zero to working out every day.

## Setting the right goals

When you set a goal to lose a certain number of pounds, it can be frustrating to watch the scale fluctuate. Even professional boxers have difficulty maintaining the same weight every day. Instead, if your goal is to lose weight, set goals based on the steps you need to take to achieve the end goal. For example, you may need to skip the 3:00 snack or change the snack to fruit or vegetables instead of salty or sugary snacks. When you have succeeded in breaking the habit -- even if it isn't 100% of the time because *no one* is perfect --, then celebrate your success. Start small and work your way up. Start working out one or two days per week, then work your way up to a sustainable level.

## A place to start

If you are unsure where to begin with your fitness goals, we are happy to help. Here are some ideas to ease into a fitness routine and help you stay focused.

### Walking

Walking is a great entry exercise because it keeps you moving, gives you energy, and provides a cardio workout that is good for the heart. January may seem challenging to start a walking routine in Nebraska, but Oakview and Westroads Mall are climate controlled and flat, making them excellent options for walking during the winter months in Omaha. Start walking ten minutes daily, then gradually increase your time, pace, or incline every few weeks. If the walk starts to feel dull, change it up by walking in a different area with different scenery.

### Stretching

Any exercise or movement will help keep your range of motion from diminishing. Stretching provides the added benefit of lengthening muscles while increasing your range of motion. Try to start your day with ten minutes of stretching. If your job doesn't require much movement, creating time during the day to stretch will get your blood flowing. When you take the time to stretch, be sure to hold each one for at least 30 seconds so the muscles have time to relax.

## Lifting

Increasing your upper body strength makes everything from carrying groceries to kids easier. Aim for upper body exercises a couple of times per week. You can use a resistance band or free weights. There are also many upper-body exercises, like push-ups, that do not require any equipment. As you progress, you will see the benefits of strength training in many areas, such as lean body mass and a better night's sleep. Working the lower body will strengthen the largest muscles, which will also help burn calories and build muscle mass. The primary muscles to focus on are the front of your thigh (quadriceps), back of the thigh (hamstrings), calves, and buttocks (glutes). Exercises for the glutes are especially important for those who have desk jobs or tend to sit for long periods, as they will help you avoid back pain by maintaining a better posture.

## Exercising

There is an exercise for everything and every muscle group. If you are wondering which are best, look for those that strengthen your core. Doing so will help you build a strong foundation for your body. Every exercise will engage your core. Building your core first will help you develop the muscles needed for other exercises. It will also help you with daily tasks as everything we do, from standing up to sitting down, engages our core. The stronger it is, the more effortless movement will be. Aim to do ten minutes of core-focused exercises twice a week. You will start to see improvements in your posture and less back pain.

## Meditating

We spend a lot of time in front of a screen and our phones, which doesn't allow us much quiet time. Our brain needs downtime to make sense of all the incoming messages it receives. Similar to our body repairing itself during sleep, our brain needs periods of inactivity to sort through information. Spending just five minutes a day meditating can increase your creativity, productivity, and attention span. While you are taking time to relax, your brain is hard at work processing information to make you smarter.

## Joining

You don't have to do it alone. We need someone to help us stay on track, and joining a fitness program will help you stay motivated. Group classes provide a social outlet and surround you with people who have similar goals. Personal training creates a routine tailor-made to your needs and lifestyle while providing a coach to help you stay motivated and on track. The team at our facility is ready to help you make 2023 the year you reach your fitness goals.