



Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

How to champion your fitness

The Winter Olympics never fail to impress. Whether you're a hockey fan or hooked on ice dancing, speed skating, or curling, watching the winter games is the next best thing to actually playing in the snow or on the ice. Though it's tempting to watch the games on TV non-stop, why not go out and play? You too can become a champion of fitness!

Create some fitness action steps

1. Start with a realistic goal. While Olympic athletes are at the top of their game, they certainly didn't start there. For example, if you haven't gone running since high school, jogging five miles a day may be unrealistic. However, walking for twenty minutes at lunch each day could be attainable. The acronym "SMART" is often used for goal-setting: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed. Health Canada suggests answering the

following questions as you formulate your SMART goals:

- What do I want to do?
- How much and how often will I do it?
- How will I do it?
- Can I do it?
- When will I do it?

2. Consider where you are now. For example, if your goal is to eventually walk 10,000 steps per day, go ahead and track your steps before you begin working up to your goal. What does your "before" look like? By setting a benchmark as well as a goal, you'll be better able to see how far you've come. Each step forward is a step in the right direction!

3. Ease into it. Sure, you may want to go for the gold, but rushing into a fitness program can be counterintuitive. For starters, doing so may not align with your SMART fitness goals (especially the realistic part). Overdoing it could also lead to burnout or physical injuries. While it's fun to watch your favourite Olympians push their bodies to the limits, a more conservative approach is just as fun and better for you in the long run.

Another reason to ease into your new fitness routine is to help solidify it as a part of your healthy lifestyle. For example, you might start by taking the stairs each day instead of the elevator in an effort to accumulate more steps. Soon it will become part of your routine and you'll automatically head for the stairwell. Once that becomes second-nature, you will be ready to tackle your next short-term goal.

Setting SMART goals, understanding where you are now and where you want to go, and easing into your fitness routine are three steps you can take to champion your fitness.

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