

Successful Self-Monitoring: Log and Chart your Progress

by: Diane Raymond

Self-Monitoring is essentially the process of recording various aspects of behavior and progress toward your health and fitness goals. The act of logging your daily journey toward improved health allows you to clearly see where you started, where you are now, and where you are headed. It is a motivational tool seldom taken advantage of, yet it can yield tremendous results when implemented correctly.

What do you log?

- Food intake
- Workout details (what you did, how long you did it, or why you didn't exercise on a particular day, how it felt, etc.)
- Changes to your routine

By logging your food/exercise habits, you can:

- Measure your progress
- Evaluate inconsistencies in your routine
- Identify problematic foods and eating patterns
- Make connections between various emotions and eating behavior
- Discover reasons why you do/don't exercise on certain days
- Decide if it is time to make changes to your routine

The process of tracking your progress enables you to modify your behaviors on the fly. For example, by tracking your workouts and food intake, you may discover that you do great during the workweek, but snowball out of control on the weekends, overeating and putting off exercise. Or, you may find that fatigue in the evenings prevents you from working out consistently. In this case, switching to morning workouts may be the solution that leads to lasting success.

Research confirms that the practice of self-monitoring increases success. Often, we overlook progress and choose to focus on "all-or-nothing" thinking. When this happens, those little setbacks or changes in our schedules derail our efforts for days, weeks, or

permanently. By monitoring yourself on a consistent basis, you can evaluate what is working and what isn't, where your weaknesses lie, and gain an overall picture of the changes taking place. This lessens the likelihood for failure by a large degree.

Follow these tips to get the most out of your exercise / nutrition-tracking system:

- Do get in the habit of focusing on your successes.
- Don't give yourself a bad grade when you slip up.
- Do evaluate your strategies often to notice what is working and what is not.
- Do focus on what you can control: workout length, workout intensity, type of exercise, and what you eat, rather than focusing on what you can't control (blood pressure, body fat, medical needs, losing "x" number of pounds today).
- Do record your thoughts/feelings associated with exercising and eating and the beliefs you need to work on changing.
- Do tweak your routines and diet when you aren't noticing progress. Small changes can bring big results.
- Do keep a positive attitude at all times.

About the Author:

Diane Raymond is a noted fitness expert and the founder of [Blue Sky Gym](#), a personal training business specializing in outdoor and in-home training, group classes, live workshops and health/fitness education.

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