

# 5 STEPS TO SUCCESS

plan your way to regular physical activity



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## step 1: what are 'action plans'?

### What are 'action plans' & how can they help me?

*Action plans* are detailed plans a person makes that outlines when, where, and how the person will be physically active.<sup>1</sup>

When people make an action plan, they create a mental representation in their head of the physical activities they plan on doing. Therefore, when they consider being active, the plan is already set in place in their memory and they will require less energy to think about what activity they are going to do, and when, where and how, they will do it.<sup>1</sup>

Action plans are believed to be particularly effective for someone who is trying to begin physical activity.

### People who create action plans are more likely to:

- act to achieve their goals faster.<sup>2</sup>
- start being physically active.<sup>3</sup>
- be successful in continuing to achieve their physical activity goals.<sup>4</sup>
- notice opportunities to carry out their physical activity goals.<sup>5</sup>

### tips for making your action plans

- Specify **what** activity you will do, and **when, where**, and **with whom** you will do it.
- Follow the **S.M.A.R.T.** goal principles when creating your action plan.
- Create a section for comments and write down information about how the activity made you feel, what you liked or didn't like about the activity, or barriers you faced.
- Think of a back-up plan.
- Find a workout friend or family member who has similar activity goals.
- Try a new activity. You may really enjoy it!
- Add variety to your activity plans by attending a different class or community activity.

### S.M.A.R.T. goals

When planning your activities, keep the **S.M.A.R.T.** principle in mind.

**Specific:** Clearly define your goal.

**Measurable:** Identify when and how you will assess your goal (e.g., intensity level, length of time).

**Adjustable:** Be open to make your goal easier/harder and adjust accordingly.

**Realistic:** Make your goal achievable & challenging.

**Time:** Identify time parameters of your goal, and try to set both short-term and long-term goals.

## Use this example to create your own weekly action plan!

	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday	sunday
what	Yin Yoga	Spin		Sculpt & Sweat		5 km run	
where	Western U.	Western U.		Western U.		Thames Trail	
when	6:00 p.m.	5:30 p.m.		6:00 p.m.		9:00 a.m.	
equipment	Yoga mat, towel, water, clothes	Water, towel, padded shorts, gym clothes		Water, towel, gym clothes		Phone with play list, gym clothes, & runners	
back-up	Spin class @ 7:00 p.m.	Run at 6:30 along Thames trail		Do 30 mins on cardio machine + core circuit (print)			
completed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
comments	I want to try a more intense yoga	I really like this spin instructor & want to find out when else he teaches.		Pretty tired today, didn't want to go, but felt so much better after. Mini-victory!		Hungry by 9:00, so I ate then ran at 10:30.	

## now it's your turn!

**step 2:** Print off your own **my action plan** template and create your plan today!

**step 3:** Read the resource **learn how coping plans can help**.

**step 4:** Print out the template **identify your barriers**.

**step 5:** Print out the template **my coping plan**.

## references

1. Sniehotta, F. F., Schwarzer, R., Scholz, U., & Schuz, R. (2005). Action planning and coping planning for longterm lifestyle change: Theory & Assessment. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 35, 565-576.
2. Orbell, S., & Sheeran, S. (2000). Motivational & Volitional processes in action initiation: A field study of the role of implementation intentions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 30, 780-797.
3. Carraro, N., & Gaudreau, P. (2013). Spontaneous and experimentally induced action planning and coping planning for physical activity: A meta-analysis. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 14, 228-248.
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5. Parks-Stamm, E. J., Gollwitzer, P. M., & Oeltingen, G. (2007). Action control by implementation intentions: Effective cue detection & efficient response initiation. *Social Cognition*, 25, 248-266.

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## step 2: my action plan

Remember **S.M.A.R.T. goals**. Visit [inmotion4life.ca](http://inmotion4life.ca) for activity ideas!

	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday	sunday
<b>what</b> (the specific activity)							
<b>where</b> (gym or trail name, or address)							
<b>when</b> (the specific time)							
<b>equipment</b> (towel, gloves, helmet, printed workout plan)							
<b>back-up</b> (list a specific back-up activity)							
<b>completed</b> (check box if completed)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
<b>comments</b> (feelings, likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, successes)							
<b>potential barriers</b> (distractions, temptations, events, conflicts, resources)							

Once you have mastered the action plan, read about **coping plans**, identify your **common barriers**, then use the template to **make your own coping plan!**

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## step 3: learn how 'coping plans' can help you

### What are 'coping plans' & how can they help me?

*Coping plans* are barrier-focused plans that specify what someone will do when they face barriers that may prevent them from being physically active.<sup>1</sup> These plans enable the person to be more successful in attaining their goals by either avoiding the temptation or carrying out the behavior regardless of whether they are faced with the barrier or not.<sup>2</sup>

#### common barriers:

- **feeling:** sad, tired, anxious, lack of motivation, or lack of self-confidence
- **resources:** perceived lack of time, money, equipment, or facilities
- **environment:** bad weather, or gym is too busy
- **people:** lack of support or distracting friends
- **events:** vacation, family obligations, or last minute social events

In order to be most effective, people who use coping planning strategies need to have tried (potentially multiple times) to be physically active, to be able to identify the barriers that are most likely to prevent them from being active.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, coping planning strategies are **more appropriate for people who have started being physically active** and are interested in learning methods to help them maintain an active lifestyle.

### tips for creating a great coping plan

- Record as many barriers as possible that have tempted you or prevented you from being active. Perhaps keep a log book or diary to track them.
- Write down how you dealt with temptations, if you did the intended or an alternative activity, and how that made you feel.
- Create a coping plan for each barrier.
- Make the plan as detailed as possible so that when you face the barrier you have a clear mental representation of how you will deal with it.
- Be realistic and honest with yourself. It's okay if you are not a morning person, just avoid planning activities in the morning.
- Be prepared! This plan will only be helpful if you have everything you will need to do the first activity as well as the back-up activity. For example, certain shoes, clothing, gym equipment, or workout routine.
- If you give in to a barrier and aren't active, don't dwell on it! Learn from it & focus on your next activity.
- For people who are new to being active, you may want to use the **in motion™ Community Challenge** to identify barriers, then create coping plans at the end in order to help you maintain your active lifestyle after the **Challenge** is over.

According to research<sup>2</sup>, **you are the best expert** for identifying your own strengths and weaknesses, and developing your own coping plan. Use our templates to **identify your barriers** and **make your coping plan**.

# tracking your personal barriers

To begin tracking your personal barriers, you may wish to select a format that works best for you (such as a daily diary, or table), then select all of the information that you wish to describe.

## important details to include:

- **when?** include the day of the week and time of day; it may help you determine a trend.
- **what exactly happened?** include relevant information about the barrier, such as the situation, people involved, feelings, or thoughts.
- **how did you respond?** did you continue the activity, modify the activity, select a different activity, not do an activity?
- **how did you feel after your response?** guilty, proud, more/less energy, frustrated, happy...
- **what are some potential solutions to overcoming this barrier in the future?**

Type of Barrier	My Barrier	Coping Plan
People	I don't like how much the spin instructor Dave on Tuesday night at 5:00 emphasizes "shedding fat"	I will go Wednesday night at 5:00, because it's a different spin instructor who apparently focuses more on getting stronger.
People	When I'm with Sue, we tend to drink wine & make unhealthy food while our kids play together.	Once a week we will plan a picnic in the park together, pack healthier foods & be more active with the kids.
Feeling	I feel too tired Thursday nights to do a high intensity workout.	I will go rollerblading Thursday night because I feel better when I go outside, and I will do the Monday night high intensity class instead.
Resources	I don't feel like I have 30-60 minutes to exercise on week nights because I don't have enough time and I don't have enough energy to do it at 8:00 at night when I put the kids to bed.	I will go for a walk-run near the field when I drop my son off at soccer on Wednesday.  I will do a 12 minute BodyRock workout Monday & Wednesday mornings before work at home (I will have the workout printed off, clothes ready, and interval timer set up the night before).
Events	At Thanksgiving every year, we spend 3 days with family sitting around, eating, and drinking.	This year, I will go for at least a 30-minute walk each of the 3 days in the afternoon. I will try to get my family to go with me, but I will do it even if they don't join me.

## references

1. Sniehotta, F. F., Schwarzer, R., Scholz, U., & Schuz, R. (2005). Action planning and coping planning for longterm lifestyle change: Theory & Assessment. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 35, 565-576.
2. Gollwitzer, P. M. (1999). Implementation intentions: Strong effects of simple plans. *American Psychologist*, 54, 493-503.
3. Justine, M., Azizan, A., Hassan, V., Salleh, Z., & Mahaf, H. (2013). Barriers to participating in physical activity and exercise among middle aged and elderly individuals. *Singapore Medical Journal*, 54(10), 581-586.
4. Reichert, F. F., Barros, A. J. D., Domingues, M. R., & Hallal, P. C. (2007). The role of perceived barriers to engagement in leisure-time physical activity. *American Journal of Public Health*, 97(3), 515-519.

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## step 4: identify your barriers

be honest with yourself and identify as many barriers as possible.

**what** was the barrier?

(time, tired, social event,  
weather, equipment)

**how did you deal**  
with the barrier?

(were you active, did you  
modify the activity, did you do  
something different)

how did you **feel** after?

(guilty, confident, energetic)

is there a **better solution**  
to the problem?

(try to be as detailed as possible)

If you are just starting to be physically active, use this template to record all barriers you face during the **in motion™ Community Challenge**. Then use the **my coping plan** template to design a plan that will help you stick to your physical activity goals!

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## step 5: my coping plans

Create a coping plan for each barrier

**barriers**

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**coping plan**

(write in pencil  
so you can make  
changes)

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Does your coping plan include details about **when** you will be physically active? (date and time)

Does your coping plan include details about **where** you will be physically active? (location, gym or trail name, address)

Does your coping plan include details about **with whom** you will be physically active? (person's name)

Does your coping plan include details about **what physical activity** you will do? (be specific; example: length of activity, exercises you will do, trail you will bike)

Does your coping plan include details about **what you will need** to carry out your coping plan? (water bottle, yoga mat, rock climbing shoes, workout routine, etc.)

**remember:** plans that are more detailed require less energy when the barrier arises, and therefore you will be more likely to successfully execute your coping plan!