

## HEALTHY LIVING IN COMMUNITY

### *How to meet your goals by creating a weekly action plan*

by Andi Waisman,

Healthy Living Program Manager, LifePath

As we reach the end of 2018, many people will be thinking about what changes they'd like to make in the new year. Eating healthier and exercising often top the lists of resolutions. Yet, as we all know, the path between setting a goal and reaching it can be fraught with many obstacles. We struggle with survival needs; we struggle with addictions; we struggle with managing all the demands on our time and attention.

Change is hard, but change is also possible. Here in the Healthy Living program at LifePath, we run programs that are proven to help people take control over their chronic health conditions, in part by exploring ways to make more behavior changes happen. People who have participated in our evidence-based programs over the years generally have fewer symptoms, such as depression, shortness of breath, anxiety, pain, mobility limitations, and have better quality of life, exercise more, and usually utilize health care less. Something in the recipe of these self-management workshops works.

The behavior change principle that underlies many of our programs is the concept of self-efficacy, the belief that we can perform the targeted behavior. How do we enhance people's confidence in their ability to manage their chronic conditions and other aspects of their lives?

One of the major tools in our self-management workshop "toolbox" that help to build self-efficacy is the tool of action planning. For about 25 to 35 percent of each weekly session, we each take turns making a specific action plan, sharing it with the group, and brainstorming solutions to the barriers that keep us from accomplishing our plan. It is through action planning that people begin to feel in control of their fate, begin to grow their confidence in their ability to make changes, and see some hope that improvement is possible.

Given a structure and support, all of us usually make good decisions about our health and get motivated to make and complete goals we want to achieve. For this reason, the group leaders and peers never tell people what to do but rather support them in what they choose to do, even when the group or their doctor might have other goals for them. By asking people to make action plans and report on these plans, participants are gently persuaded and supported to try new activities they truly want for themselves.

How does action planning work? Sometimes it can be overwhelming to think about the changes we want to make or the activities we want to accomplish. They seem too big to work on all at once, which makes



Andi Waisman

**"It is through action planning that people begin to feel in control of their fate, begin to grow their confidence in their ability to make changes, and see some hope that improvement is possible."**

it hard to get started. So, action planning asks people to commit to attempting, in front of a group of people, a small, "doable" action step, one that is achievable, specific, and answers the questions of what, how much, when, and how often.

For example, a person who wants to improve fitness might break this goal into several steps over the course of a few weeks:

1. Research what type of exercise to do.
2. Find a place to exercise.
3. Start an exercise program by walking for five minutes, two or three times a week.
4. Ask a friend to exercise with them.

Each step should be action-specific. For example, losing weight is not an action or behavior, but replacing processed food snacks with fruit between meals is.

Peer support and accountability are important aspects of this technique. The thought of facing their group and having to admit that they blew off their plan is, for some, the motivator to complete it.

We are continually impressed with the

action plans our participants commit to and complete. Some of these have been:

- Taking an art and wine class
- Keeping an eating journal
- Walking 20 minutes a day
- Scheduling regular meals for one week
- Take a shorter nap during the day
- Limiting an evening snack to fruits or vegetables
- Joining a gym
- Going to sleep by 10:30 on two nights
- Putting a positive statement on the mirror
- Doing the shoulder exercises in the book
- Standing up at least 25 times during the day
- Drinking a glass of water before eating
- Calling a parent every day

Sometimes we don't accomplish our plan. We run into barriers: the weather, a spouse who buys food we don't want to eat, our lack of motivation, or our too busy lives. We then work together to brainstorm solutions to those barriers. We pick a solution to try and start again. I believe it is this restart – this human instinct to set goals for ourselves for our immediate future, to see the possibility ahead – that grows our confidence.

Even if you can't attend a LifePath workshop, you can still try action planning on your own. Find a friend to make a weekly date with. Support each other to think of a small, specific, doable action plan that you each really want to accomplish over the coming week, and then check in to see how it went. Also, try calling your friend in the middle of the week to remind them of what they wanted to accomplish and express that you have faith in them; see how gratifying that feels.

At this turn of the year, when we naturally are drawn to new year's resolutions to start fresh with hopes and dreams for the year ahead, know that the folks at LifePath are cheering you on and want to hear about your successes and challenges.

To learn more about Healthy Living workshops, visit [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org) or give Andi a call at 413-773-5555 x2297 or 978-544-2259 x2297. You can also email Andi at [awaisman@lifepathma.org](mailto:awaisman@lifepathma.org).

In addition to the workshops, the Healthy Living Program offers a monthly alumni group where graduates from any of the workshops support each other in making and accomplishing our action plans. The alumni group meets on the first Thursday of the month, from 2:00-3:45 p.m., at the Greenfield Senior Center.

More "Healthy Living in Community" articles can be read at [LifePathMA.org/news/stories/healthy-living-in-community](http://LifePathMA.org/news/stories/healthy-living-in-community).

## HEALTHY INCENTIVES PROGRAM CONTINUES TO BOOST SNAP BENEFITS

Even though it's winter, local fruits and vegetables are still available in our abundant hills and valleys, thanks to the efforts of local farmers. For people who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, a special program can help to make these healthy local foods more affordable.



Through the Massachusetts Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), participants can double the value of their SNAP benefits when making certain purchases at certain farmers markets. The program has been extended through February 28, 2019. It is also set to resume in the spring.

HIP helps families afford more fresh, canned, dried, and frozen fruits and vegetables without added salts, sugars, fats, or oils. HIP adds the amount of your purchase instantly back to your Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, up to a certain value each month. If you are a household of one or two people

and spend \$40 of your SNAP benefits at a HIP retailer, you will earn \$40 credit back in your SNAP account. For a household of three to five people, the amount is \$60, and it is \$80 for a household of six or more. Your receipt will show the amount of additional SNAP dollars you have earned.

Though most local farmers' markets have closed for the season, the Greenfield Winter Farmers' Market, taking place at the Four Corners School at 21 Ferrante Ave on the first Saturday of the month until March 2 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., participates in HIP. Beyond Franklin County, the Amherst Winter Farmers' Market takes place at the Hampshire Mall in Hadley on Saturdays through March 16, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and the Northampton Winter Farmers' Market also takes place on Saturdays, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Northampton Senior Center at 67 Conz Street; both participate in HIP.

In addition to farmers markets, some farm stands, mobile markets, and Community

Supported Agriculture (CSAs) are also HIP retailers. To find more information or other HIP retailers near you, visit [www.mass.gov/hip](http://www.mass.gov/hip) for a directory, call Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline at 1-800-645-8333, or look for the HIP logo.

CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture) offers a complete directory of farmers markets at [www.buylocalfood.org](http://www.buylocalfood.org). To request a hard copy, contact the CISA office at 413-665-7100 or send an email to [info@buylocalfood.org](mailto:info@buylocalfood.org).

The Nutrition Program at LifePath operates many senior dining centers and senior luncheon clubs, as well as the Meals on Wheels program, across Franklin County and the North Quabbin region. Home Care and other programs may offer assistance with grocery shopping. To learn more, contact us at 413-773-5555, 978-544-2259, or [info@lifepathma.org](mailto:info@lifepathma.org). Read more online at [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org).

## ORAL HEALTH TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Do you take care of a parent or someone needing support with their care? If so, remember that a healthy mouth can help them enjoy food, chew better, eat well, and avoid pain and tooth loss.

Plaque puts a healthy mouth at risk. It can collect on teeth that aren't brushed well. The buildup can cause bad breath, tooth decay, and gum disease.

Some individuals need to be reminded to brush and floss teeth. Others may need help actually getting it done.

You can take steps to help make brushing easier. For example, try a power or multiple-sided toothbrush. You can also modify the toothbrush handle to make it easier to hold.

**"Some individuals need to be reminded to brush and floss teeth. Others may need help actually getting it done."**

If you are providing support, remember to wash your hands and wear disposable gloves before you begin. Use the "tell-show-do" approach. Tell them what you are going to do, show them, and then do

what you've described.

Regular dental visits are important too. At a dental visit, you can ask for ways to help the person you care for.

The National Institutes of Health has a series of fact sheets to help caregivers learn more about protecting oral health in older adults; it can be found at [www.nidcr.nih.gov/caregivers](http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/caregivers).

Article adapted from the National Institutes of Health November 2018 News in Health, available online at [newsinhealth.nih.gov](http://newsinhealth.nih.gov).



**Collective Home Care Inc.**  
 Providing Compassionate and Professional Home Health Care Services in Franklin and Hampshire Counties.  
**413-397-9933**  
 Locally Owned and Operated since 1999

**IN GOOD COMPANY**  
 A SKILLED ELDER COMPANION SERVICE

Offering skilled and intentional companionship to elders and others in the final phase of life.

[sitalang@ingoodcompanynow.com](mailto:sitalang@ingoodcompanynow.com)  
[www.ingoodcompanynow.com](http://www.ingoodcompanynow.com)  
**413-834-7569**



**Sita Lang**  
 Hospice trained/  
 CPR certified

*Caring*  
 for Friends, Family and Neighbors

**Hospice of Franklin County**

With more than a decade of serving our community, Hospice of Franklin County is the name to call on for superior, personalized care that lets our patients lead the way.

**HOSPICE**  
 of Franklin County  
 A Member of Berkshire Healthcare

329 Conway Street  
 Greenfield, MA 01301  
**413-774-2400**  
[www.hospicefc.org](http://www.hospicefc.org)



*"You learn some great history and stories that you'd never have known without meeting these people. They're all unique and special in their own way."*

— Alan Coutinho, Volunteer Meals on Wheels Driver



We would like to wish our community a  
**Safe, Happy & Healthy HOLIDAY SEASON!**  
 From our family to yours

**WIZZ RADIO**  
**AM 1520**

**Seriously. We Need To Talk About Your Bathroom**

**Update your shower!**



**Showers • Tubs • Wall Systems • Liners • Shower Doors**

413-376-7151  
 1-800-BATHTUB  
[www.rebath.com](http://www.rebath.com)

**RE-BATH**

Free In-Home Estimates

Showroom 6 French King Highway, Greenfield

Find your story.  
 Volunteer with LifePath.

413.773.5555 | 978.544.2259 | 800.732.4636  
[Info@LifePathMA.org](mailto:Info@LifePathMA.org) | [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org)