

Setting Individual Goals

Goal-setting discussions should focus on realistic weight management milestones and include both patients' long term goals and the incremental milestones that will help lead them achieve their ultimate goals.

Getting Started

Start by asking about how the patient's weight affects his or her medical, physical, emotional, and day-to-day well-being. Next, ask about the patient's long-term life goals, and whether the patient thinks a weight management program might help improve both health problems now and improve the patient's chances of meeting his or her long-term goals.

Examples

You've told me about your back and joint pain, and you also have prediabetes. Do you think those problems are related to your weight?

Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time? What would you like to be doing in your life?

How much weight do you think you would need to lose to feel better now? How much do you think you need to lose to allow you to achieve your long-term life goals?

Dispelling Myths and Defining Success

Many patients believe they need to achieve a normal body mass index, or their weight loss effort is a failure. It's important to define success in realistic terms but also not discourage patients who have more ambitious long-term goals.

Examples

You say you want to lose 50 pounds before your daughter's wedding six months from now. What's more important to you, the number of pounds, or how you feel?

If feeling better physically is your real goal, let's talk about some strategies that will help you start managing your weight for your health. A lot of your current issues can be improved if we can bring your weight down by 7 to 10%.

Reaching your ideal weight is possible, but it could take several years to do it in a healthy way. Let's start by looking at what changes we can make now to start reducing your weight and improving your health, with the goal of taking off 10% of your weight. When we've met that goal, we can set another one and keep going.

Keep a Record of Goals and Whether They've Been Achieved

When setting goals with the patient, keep a [written record](#) of the short- and long-term goals. Readjust goals on an ongoing basis as the patient passes each milestone.

