

Healthy Change Journal 1

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Part 1: Identify Change Behaviour

A day in my life typically consists of me spending its entirety locked away in my dimly lit room, either slaving away at homework on my laptop or procrastinating by watching videos in bed. Essentially, I do not get out or move much, and with the pandemic, this habit has gotten even worse because even when I do want to go out and change up my usual routine, I am unable to, due to the legal restrictions put in place by the provincial government. As a result, I have decided that my health behaviour change for this journal will be to have a step count of at least five thousand steps every single day from outdoor aerobic exercise of my choice. This will ensure I am getting fresh air and sunlight, as well as some movement. I plan to eventually increase this goal once I have established it as a habit, but I feel as though this is a good starting point for myself.

After years of inactivity, I have seen the direct effects this behaviour has had on my health: decreased endurance and strength in relation to physical activity, low motivation to accomplish tasks, and a depressed mood due to a lack of vitamin D from sunlight. Seeing my current state of health, I feel guilty knowing I let myself establish such an unhealthy habit, especially since I used to actively participate in organized sports as a kid and was heavily motivated to exercise in my spare time.

Over the past couple of years, I have tried to establish an exercise routine multiple times, but failed each time for various reasons, including losing motivation and not having enough time to allocate specifically towards physical activity daily. Each attempt varied—some were successful for mere days, while others were maintained for a month or two. One of my longest

successes was when I used a rewards app back in high school that awarded me with credits towards movie purchases when I reached my daily step goal with a partner; however, the app was soon discontinued, and I resumed my usual routine. During my second semester of university, I made another huge effort by making my friend go to the campus gym to exercise with me. This was the most successful of my attempts; however, the habit was interrupted again by the closure of the gym due to the ongoing pandemic. Not exercising has caused not only a myriad of physical health problems for me, such as fatigue and insomnia, but also exacerbated my mental health issues by causing an underlying guilt about not being active.

I want to change this habit partially because of the direct impacts it has on my mental and physical health, but also because I want to get to a point where I can confidently call myself an athletic person. As mentioned in Appendix C, one of my long-term goals is to run a marathon. For me, completing a marathon would be a definite sign that I am athletic. Marathons take months or even years of dedicated training and hard work; this is exactly what I hope this healthy change forces me to establish. The rest of my long-term goals were indirect benefits that I hope to obtain from this healthy change including improved mood and relationships. Overall, I believe that the discipline that is required to make myself walk at least five thousand steps a day, will assist me in changing other unhealthy habits, eventually leading me to lead a balanced and healthy life. When I am exercising regularly, I will not feel any more guilt about wasting my time indoors while my health deteriorates.

In Appendix D, I discussed three wishes I would like to help me reach my goal: having a friend who willing to exercise with me, having opportunities to exercise in new places (e.g., road trips to hiking spots in Ontario), and having sunny weather when I exercise outdoors. The reason I was so active as a kid was because I was playing sports on various teams. Exercising with my

friends gave me the motivation to complete more physically challenging tasks and made the whole experience enjoyable. Most of my previous attempts to start exercising again failed because I was disappointed at not having this same feeling when exercising alone. The next wish involves changing up my location to create excitement and prevent boredom from repeating the same types of exercises. Lastly, I am more motivated to be more productive when the weather is clear and warm out. Although it is not something within my control, I can also research the day's forecast and adjust my exercise plan accordingly so that I am not debilitated by any unfavorable weather patterns.

Part 2: Identify Factors that Help and Hinder your Healthy Change

In the past, my failure to stick to an exercise regimen was usually due to a lack of motivation. I would start going on runs in the morning while being extremely motivated, but after a week of the same monotony, I found myself getting sick of it. Each time I reached that point, I noticed that I began to make excuses to skip out on exercise: the weather was not fit for outdoor exercise, I did not sleep enough at night, or I just did not feel like getting up and going out. These factors will reappear in this attempt as well. I also anticipate new factors to appear this time, such as opting to spend the allotted timeslot on schoolwork instead when I am overwhelmed with assignments. Weather will be another big obstacle as the temperatures starts to decrease. When it begins to snow, I may have to find an alternative to outdoor exercise.

As indicated in Appendix E and F, my motivation to change is personal so most of my temptations will stem from internal conflict including my mood and affect. Everyone deals with such obstacles as they are mostly rooted in the mind and are removed by changing your perception—which is not a simple thing to do. If I change my values so that I view exercise as

more important than my other tasks, it will be easier for me to avoid skipping exercise in favour of doing schoolwork.

Although my motivation to adhere to my goal is rooted in internal factors, I believe external factors, such as support from friends, will help motivate my progress. Previously when I agreed to workout with friends, I found I was less likely to skip out because someone else was involved in the plan. Therefore, splitting up my exercise so I spend some days exercising with friends will aid me to stick to a set routine. In terms of resources, I find that tracking my step count with mobile apps helps to motivate me by showing my progress. When I see that I exercised less one day of the week, I have the intention to fix that by exercising more the next day to make up for my loss. In the past, the rewards app was a big incentive for me to exercise as I was getting rewarded with something I loved: movies. To replace this since it was discontinued, I have decided that I will plan various rewards throughout the month for when I meet a certain number of step counts. For example, one of these smaller goals could be: if I meet my goal of five thousand steps two weeks in a row, I will treat myself to a movie night at home.

In Appendix G, I discussed some of the positive and negative things associated with this change. Some of the positive effects of walking more often include improved cardiovascular health, more time to self-reflection, and it is a method to destress. All three aspects are important to me as I currently lack in all three domains. In terms of negatives caused by exercise, the most important point is that it is time-consuming. As a full-time nursing student who also engages in extracurriculars, this is an important factor to consider because it forces me to prioritize certain tasks over others. I consider physical activity important so setting time aside to accomplish it, is not that big of a concern for me. Other factors to consider are the physical exhaustion due to exercise that may impede with other scheduled tasks that follow and the current risk of

contracting the coronavirus due to increased contact with other people when exercising in public; however, I do not consider these factors too important since there are ways to avoid these effects, such as change the time or location where I exercise.

Part 3: Summary and Conclusion

Health behaviours are different activities people incorporate into their lives to improve their current health (Taylor et al., 2020). These activities can be as small as reading a brochure about diabetes management to as big as implementing a diet free of refined and processed sugars. According to Taylor et al. (2020), various factors can influence an individual to change behaviour including their age, values, goals, and general level of knowledge regarding health, as well as systemic factors, such as an individual's access to health services that would encourage healthy behaviours. Personally, my family is a big impact on my health behaviours since many of my relatives are in the medical field and taught me the importance of maintaining my health from a young age. On the other hand, factors such as culture have played a negative impact in my life. As a kid, schools would heavily promote the importance of physical activity on a daily basis and provide many opportunities to be active, but as I have gotten older, the emphasis has been shifted more towards education.

When it come to exercise specifically, various strategies assist people to implement these changes into their lifestyles. Taylor et al. (2020) discuss the importance of accessibility and social support when it comes to exercise. Individuals who live in environments that have easy access to public facilities like parks and gyms have more opportunities to exercise. Moreover, if they live in a community where many residents actively exercise outdoors, these individuals will be encouraged by the visual example set by their neighbours. Social support is very similar to the community influence; it can be achieved through initiatives such as group exercise. Having the

support of others makes the exercise more entertaining and can encourage an individual to be proactive in promoting healthy behaviours. Emerging technology also shows promise in aiding the general population to get more active. Websites about physical activity and text messaging that reminds people to exercise has been showing success in promoting exercise (Taylor et al., 2020).

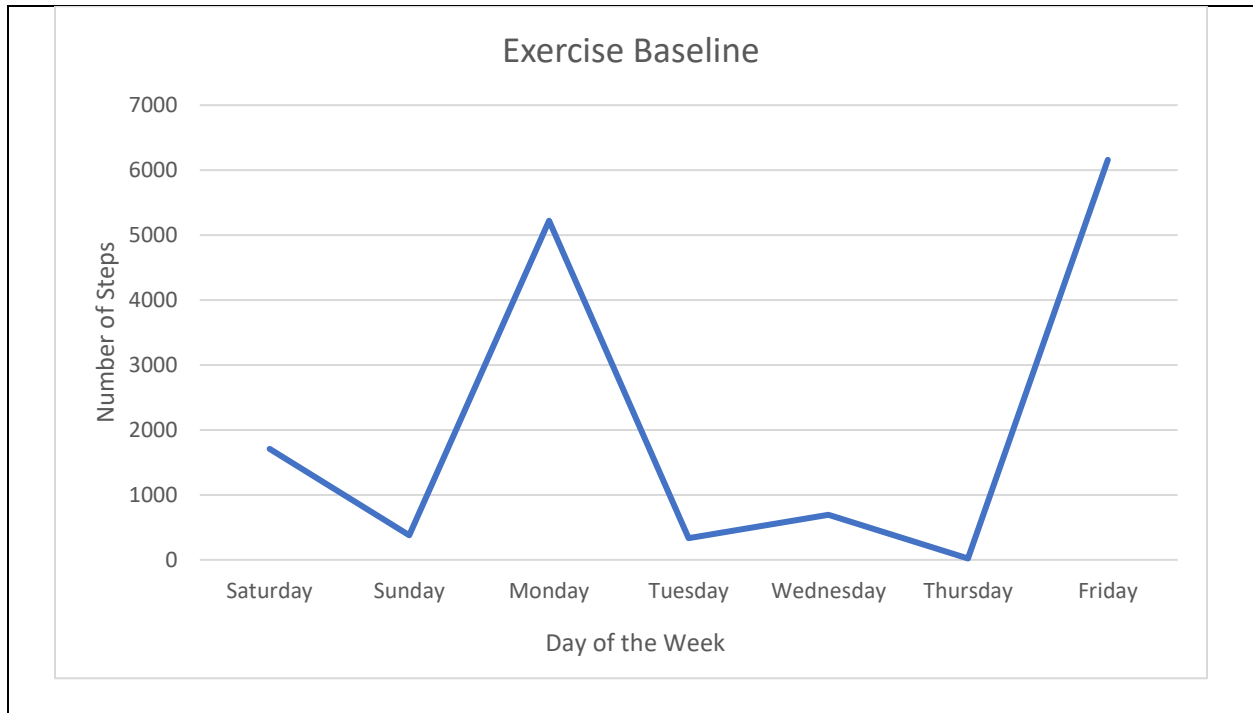
Being well-informed about behaviour changes empowers me to succeed in my goal to achieve a step count of five thousand every day more because I am now aware about the factors that will assist and impede my progress. My next steps will include doing more research on different types of aerobic activities I can do so that I will have a variety of choices to choose from. This will help me from getting bored with the same exercises. I plan on going on a walk around my block everyday in the evening so that the time does not conflict with any of my classes. To ensure I stick to my plan, I will ask my close friend and neighbour to join me in exercising at least two days of the week. Having someone else participating will keep me accountable. Finally, I plan on downloading multiple apps (e.g., Google Fit, Samsung Health, etc.) to track my progress and allow me to analyze trends in my activity.

Admittedly, I am not quite sure I will be able to succeed with my goal since there are also unexpected factors that can impede even the most well-thought-out plans. It also does not help that my mind replays endless memories of past failures. Despite my fears, I am very motivated to try. Even if I do not complete my original goal, I am confident that I will gain some sort of knowledge that will assist in a future attempt, and to me, that may be more important than actually reaching my goal.

References

Taylor, S. E., Sirois, F., & Molnar, D. (2020). *Health psychology*. McGraw-Hill Education

Appendix A: Baseline Frequency



Day	Number of Steps	Notes
1 – Saturday, October 10	1710	Went grocery shopping
2 – Sunday, October 11	379	Spent the day studying at home
3 – Monday, October 12	5223	Took a long walk with a friend
4 – Tuesday, October 13	335	Spent the day studying at home
5 – Wednesday, October 14	692	Spent the day studying at home
6 – Thursday, October 15	21	Felt sick this day, so I stayed in bed all day
7 – Friday, October 16	6158	Went biking with a friend

Appendix B: Healthy Change Motivation Questions

Please write the health behaviour you are considering changing below and answer the following questions.

1. Reducing my inactivity at home by engaging in regular aerobic activity outdoors evidenced by a daily step count of at least 5000 steps 7 days a week at any time of the day.

How likely are you to engage in this health behaviour change in the near future? That is how strong are your intentions to actually follow through and start to change this behaviour within the next six months?

Please rate your intentions on the scale below:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No intention, not likely at all that I will follow through.				Moderate intentions, I may or may not follow through.		Very strong intentions, I am certain that I will follow through.		

How motivated do you feel to try and change this health behaviour?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all motivated				Moderately motivated		Extremely motivated		

Have you tried to change this behaviour before? YES _ NO



Appendix C: Superordinate Projects



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Although some projects exist in isolation, most projects are usually undertaken as a part of a larger, longer-term goal. In this section we are interested in exploring how your most important healthy change project is related to larger, longer term goals. On the next page, you will see a series of blank columns. **In the first column** please copy your most important healthy change project. For this healthy change project, we would like you to ask yourself: **"What longer-term or larger -scale project (or goal) is this project a part of?"** or simply **"Why am I working on this project?"**

When you have decided which larger project(s) your initial project is related to, note it (or them) down in the blank areas in the next column (to the right) that are joined by arrows to the original project. **If there is only one longer-term project related to your initial project, leave the other lines blank.** You may also decide there is no larger project connected with your initial project, in which case go on to the next set of instructions.

Next we would like you to look at the **one or two higher-order projects** you have written out in column 2 and for each of these, ask yourself the same question: **"What longer term or larger scale project (or goal) is this project a part of?"**

For each of the projects in the second column **decide on whether there is a larger goal associated with that project** and then write it in the appropriate bank in the column to the right. Once you have completed this column, we would like you to continue until you find that you have reached the highest-order (longest-term, largest-scale) project associated with your original healthy change project.

For example: An original healthy change project of **"Stop overeating"** could possibly be related to a series of larger projects:

Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
→ lose 20 lbs	→ look more attractive	→ find a relationship	→ get married
→ feel better about myself	→ be/feel healthier		

My healthy change project: Exercise regularly

Please fill in as many columns below as they apply to your healthy change project, with the largest and most long term goals appearing in the later columns. Leave blank columns as needed and add arrows as required.

Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
→ Build endurance	→ Improve my cardiovascular health	→ Take longer/faster runs	→ Run a marathon
→ Sleep better	→ Have more energy	→ Be more productive	→ Accomplish all daily tasks
→ Destress	→ increased concentration when performing schoolwork	→ Better grades	
→ Get more sunshine time	→ More natural vitamin D synthesis	→ Take less supplements	
→ Feel better about myself	→ More confidence to try new activities		
→ Be in a better mood	→ Actively take part in family activities	→ Improved familial relationship	



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Appendix D: Three Wishes

Now, think again about the health behaviour/habit that you most want to change. Imagine that you have found a magical bottle that contains a genie who will grant you any three wishes regarding this health behaviour you want to change EXCEPT making you change the health behaviour without you making any effort.



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What three things would you wish for to make it easier for you to be successful in changing this health behaviour? The wishes can include having more of something or gaining something that you currently don't have but need, or having less of something, or losing something that you feel will interfere with making this change.

Some things that might help you successfully change this health habit may include having more support from friends/family, more time, less stress, more self-discipline, less temptation, special equipment, more motivation, more money, etc. These are just examples so feel free to wish for anything at all that would help you meet your goal of changing this health habit.

Please write these three “wishes” in the spaces below:

- 1) A friend who is willing to exercise with me
- 2) Opportunities to exercise in new places (e.g., road trips to hiking spots in Ontario)
- 3) Sunny weather when I go out to exercise outdoors

How likely do you think it is that each of these wishes will come true?

Please use the scale below to rate each wish:

Wish # 1

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all likely to come true				May or may not come true			Very likely to come true	

Wish # 2

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all likely to come true				May or may not come true			Very likely to come true	

Wish # 3

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all likely to come true				May or may not come true			Very likely to come true	

Appendix E: GOAL OWNERSHIP



Often when we set out to achieve a goal such as making the healthy change you listed, we decide to make this change for reasons that are not completely our own. Sometimes we may try to make a healthy change because someone like a doctor or a friend or family member has suggested that we do so, or made us feel like we have to make this change. Other times we decide to make this change just for ourselves.

How much do you feel like you making this healthy change is for others as opposed to just for yourself?

Rate how much you **currently feel** like making this healthy change is for someone else versus just for yourself, where 1 is completely for yourself, 5 is equally for you and for another person, and 9 is completely for another person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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I started making this change completely for myself.

I started making this change equally for myself and for other people.

I started making this change completely for other people or another person.

If you rated this behaviour with a value greater than 3 then please list below your relationship(s) to the person/people who influenced your decision to start this healthy change. For those healthy changes where you scored 3 or less please just check “not applicable” .

Not Applicable	Healthy change	Relationship to person(s) who influenced you starting this healthy change
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Appendix F: Situational Temptations Questionnaire

For each of the situations below, please circle the number (1-5) that corresponds with how strongly you feel you may be tempted to stray from your planned healthy behaviour(s).

1 NOT AT ALL TEMPTED	2 NOT VERY TEMPTED	3 MODERATELY TEMPTED	4 VERY TEMPTED	5 EXTREMELY TEMPTED
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When trying to make my healthy behaviour change(s), I may be tempted...

1) when friends say it's okay to stray from my healthy	1	2	3	4	5
2) when I have had a hard day and am feeling bad about myself	1	2	3	4	5
3) when I am craving something unhealthy (e.g. junk food, cigarettes) or feeling lazy	1	2	3	4	5
4) when an unexpected social event comes up that I know will interfere with my lifestyle change	1	2	3	4	5
5) During those times when I feel depressed about something	1	2	3	4	5
6) when others around me are engaging in unhealthy behaviour (e.g. smoking, eating unhealthy food, being a "couch potato"/inactive)	1	2	3	4	5
7) when I'm out having a good time or celebrating with friends	1	2	3	4	5
8) on days when things are not going my way and I feel frustrated	1	2	3	4	5
9) when it's been a while since I've had a treat or given myself a break	1	2	3	4	5



Appendix G: Decisional Balance

Making healthy changes can have consequences, both positive and negative, for other aspects of your life. For example, eating healthier can make you feel better about yourself, but it may also mean that you have to give up or limit the unhealthy foods that you enjoy.



In the numbered spaces below, please list three **positive** outcomes associated with making this healthy behaviour change and indicate how important (1-5) each outcome is to you.

1) Improves cardiovascular health and helps build endurance/strength necessary for more intense aerobic exercises

1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	A LITTLE IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

2) Forces me to take a break from whatever I am doing; time dedicated to self-reflection and meditation because you are focusing on your body and its processes (like breathing patterns)

1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	A LITTLE IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

3) Get rid of any negative energy I am holding in at the moment; destress

1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	A LITTLE IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

When thinking about your healthy change again, please list three **negative** outcomes associated with making this healthy behaviour change and indicate how important (1-5) each outcome is to you.

1) Requires dedicated time which causes less time to be put toward other important tasks such as completing school assignments

1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	A LITTLE IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

2) Unable to complete any tasks directly after exercising because I will be physically exhausted and will just want to rest until my energy is regained

1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	A LITTLE IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

3) Increased chance of getting COVID when exercising in public areas due to interactions with other people

1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	A LITTLE IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

