



Be Well Aware – Health Article



How to Encourage Others in Healthy Lifestyles

Adopting Healthy Habits and Encouraging Others

Adopting healthy lifestyle habits can be challenging, especially if unhealthier habits have been present for long amounts of time. But it's never too late to transform some of our everyday behaviors from ones that hinder our wellness to ones that encourage it.

In fact, maybe you've already figured it out for yourself. You've found your "WHY", discovered what kind of exercise you love, established a routine, and you've set S.M.A.R.T. goals and have tracked your progress along the way. Kudos to you!

Unfortunately, you have that person you love in your life that hasn't been quite as successful. They've talked to you about how they *want* to make changes but have been struggling to keep their motivation up and hold themselves accountable. You want to help them, but how?

- Help them figure out their "WHY"
- Be accountability buddies
- Try something new together and make it fun!
- Encourage them to make it a routine
- Suggest they work with a professional

Help Them Figure Out Their "WHY"

Chances are, their reasons for making changes in their health behaviors will be different than your own. Understanding their goals and what good health means to them is important when trying to help them figure out their path. WHY do they want to make these changes? What value do they think it will bring to their life? This quick exercise can help them figure out that WHY:

- Start with having them clearly state their objective. For example – their goal is to lose 10 pounds.
- Ask them "why?". Their answer might be "So I can fit into my smaller clothes and look good at the beach this summer".
- Ask them "why?" again. They may say "So I can look better and be more confident".
- Why? What will that confidence do? "So I can feel better about myself and live the life I dream of living".

This exercise may take more or less "whys", but at the end you want them to state their ultimate reason for pursuing their goal.



Be Accountability Buddies

By being their accountability buddy, you can help them set and maintain their goal for their nutrition habits, fitness goals, and overall well-being. Knowing that someone is paying attention to their habits (and vice versa!) can be encouraging and keep them on track. Plus, it gives them someone to turn to when they may be feeling low in spirits and need a pick-me-up or some extra motivation. Just remember that if they ever do slip up (which is normal, because everyone does!) to be non-judgmental, and encourage them to figure out how they can do a better job next time.

Try Something New Together and Make it Fun!

Maybe you try cooking a new recipe or go to a new group fitness class together. Not only will they have their accountability buddy with them, but it may provide a little bit of friendly competition, too! Plus, odds are you both have tried something that the other one hasn't. If your friend really likes Zumba, go to that Zumba class with them! Or maybe you love taking HIIT classes, but they've

never tried HIIT before. Changing things up can help keep exercise fun for both of you, and might even help you both find a new activity you enjoy!

Encourage Them to Make it a Routine

Maybe the two of you make fitness or cooking together something you do a few times a week, or maybe you just hold each other accountable via text message or FaceTime. Either way, helping them figure out how they can add their exercise or healthy eating habits to their daily routine makes it more likely they'll stick with it. Encourage them to schedule their workout or meal prepping onto their calendar and treat it like an appointment they can't miss.

Suggest They Work with a Professional

Know that your reinforcement may have limits, and sometimes we, as humans, need the help of a professional. If this is the case, remember to come at it without judgment. Simply put, professionals may have a toolbox that's fuller than yours is. If they need an extra push, working with a fitness or nutrition professional may be that extra support they need. If you or someone else you know has personally worked with a Personal Trainer or Dietitian that was really effective, recommend them! If you don't know of anyone specifically, you can still encourage them to find (or even offer to help them find) someone knowledgeable about their goals and what it may take to get them there.

Stay Neutral and Loving

Above all else, make sure they know that you love and support them. You want them to succeed and be able to talk to you without any judgment. Regardless of how you help them in the end, we all appreciate having someone in our corner!

References:

<https://www.afpafitness.com/blog/healthy-habits-for-life>

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/nutrition/help-people-live-healthy-lifestyle>

<https://www.chnny.org/how-to-support-loved-ones-to-choose-healthy-habits/>

<https://www.webmd.com/diet/obesity/features/10-ways-to-help-a-loved-one-lose-weight>