



American Heart Association®

Hard Hats with Heart™



## Toolbox Talks

### Setbacks & Recovery: It's Ok

Setbacks are a normal part of the change process. We tend to expect a quick fix based on our determination despite it not being realistic. And when we don't see results of our efforts early on, we can get discouraged and relapse into old behaviors.

If this happens to you, don't look at it as a failure. Instead, turn it into an opportunity to fine-tune your strategy or reclaim your rhythm through a new approach. Try a dance class if counting sit-ups isn't working for you. Find an engaging self-help book with new suggestions on how to stay motivated.

Perhaps you'd follow through better if you had a reminder, like the alarm in your car that prompts you to lock your seatbelt. Set a watch or your phone to cue you if you're not drinking enough water throughout the day. Create reminders on your laptop to get up and stretch on the hour if you're not moving enough during an office workday.

The important point is not to let yourself slip back into old patterns until the new behavior can take hold. It can take an average of around 10 weeks to establish a new habit, research suggests. If you're finding it difficult, try rewarding yourself for small achievements to keep the momentum going. Buy a new song for your media player after every week you resist fried food or beer, for instance.

#### Track Your Progress

Monitoring your behavior through a diary or digital app can help you stay on track. Write down what time you went to bed and how many hours of sleep you got. Carry a device or use an app to count the number of steps you take each day. Recording what you eat can be particularly helpful for people trying to lose weight.

#### Discussion Questions:

- What do you do when you slip-up? How can you change that?

#### Frequently Asked Questions:

##### What about slip-ups?

Occasional slip-ups happen to everyone. Perfection isn't required to develop new habits. The best thing to do when you have a setback is to learn from it — think of your previous attempt as “practice” — and keep moving forward. You're playing the long game: What matters is making it to the goalpost on your terms.

Always have a backup plan, too, for when you miss a scheduled task. Say you missed your Thursday morning workout. Instead of writing it off, visit the gym or jog around the neighborhood at a more convenient time later. Being flexible here and there can help in making healthy behavior stick.

Lastly, to boost your resilience during tough times, revisit the moment you became inspired to change. Remind yourself why you set this goal and how it will improve your life.