

# Small Steps to Health and Wealth

## Strategy 17 - Take Calculated Risks and Conquer Your Fears (Health)

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The words "risk" and "risk-taking" are frequently seen in personal development and self-improvement materials. Like any life change, making changes to improve health involves taking risks. By changing, you are moving out of your "comfort zone" and implementing new behaviors that are different and/or challenging. A frequently cited poem about risk concludes with the words "To try at all...is to risk failure. But to risk, we must, because the greatest hazard in life...is to risk nothing."

Virtually everything people do in life requires

some type of risk. Although we may not realize it, we are constantly weighing the pros and cons of various actions. For example, when taking a dog outdoors for a walk to get exercise, we risk falling or getting hit by a car. Yet many people take this risk in order to do something that they enjoy.

Not all risks are created equally, however. Some risks, such as extreme sports, smoking, and the use of illegal drugs are clearly dangerous and/or unhealthy. Then there are *calculated* risks, such as the gradual weight loss of 40 pounds over a year with a better diet and exercise. With



calculated risks, you have a vision about where you want to be and a roadmap to get there. Remaining focused on your goals, and addressing obstacles along the way (eating out, etc.) increase the odds of success. Even if you think you have failed, you are a success as long as you learned something from the experience and will resolve to do better next time. Keep trying!!

A common roadblock to risk-taking is fear, such as fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of pain, fear of loss, or fear of reactions by other people. With respect to health behaviors, fears about making changes might include the fear of:

- Lost friendships by not smoking/drinking around friends who still smoke/drink.
- A health screening exam might indicate the presence of a disease.
- Having a heart attack while exercising because it happened to a friend.
- Being successful and then relapsing.

In short, know your risks but take the risk to be a healthier you.

### Action Items:

- Visit the *Your Disease Risk* website at: <https://siteman.wustl.edu/prevention/ydr/> and evaluate your risk for various diseases.
- Take a risk to implement at least one behavior change to improve your health – remember, small steps.
- Describe role models for successful health behavior changes and how you can copy their practices.

### Deskercise!

While on a phone call, do some shoulder shrugs to reduce tension in your neck and back. Simply raise your shoulders up toward your ears and hold for 10 seconds. Then relax and repeat 10 more times.