



Dakota Wellness Program

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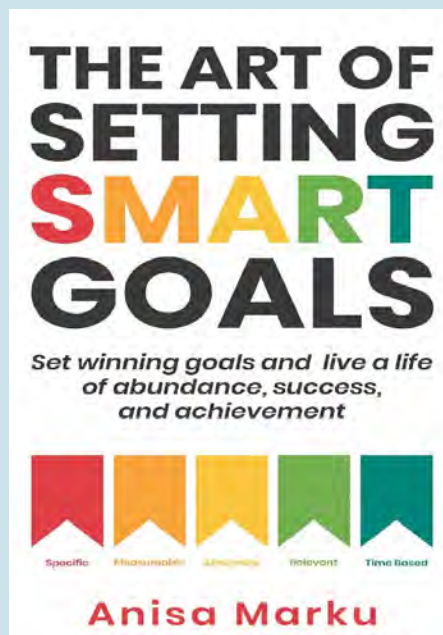
Skip the resolutions:

How SMART goals can make 2026 your healthiest, happiest year yet

As another year begins, many of us feel pressure to reinvent ourselves through lofty New Year's resolutions – but often, those promises lead to guilt and burnout rather than balance. A gentler, more sustainable approach is to set **SMART goals**, which are **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant** and **Time-bound**. This framework shifts the focus from drastic overhauls to mindful progress that supports your overall well-being.

Instead of vowing to “get fit,” try something specific, like taking a 30-minute walk three times a week. Rather than “be more productive,” commit to spending 10 focused minutes each morning planning your day. These realistic intentions build momentum and confidence, helping you feel grounded instead of overwhelmed.

SMART goals encourage you to honor where you are, move at your own pace and celebrate each small success. When you release the pressure to transform overnight, you create space for meaningful, lasting change. **In 2026, let your wellness journey be guided by self-compassion, steady growth and genuine joy in the process.**



Monthly Book Club

The Art of Setting SMART Goals by Anisa Marku

The Art of Setting SMART Goals by Anisa Marku is a practical guide to turning vague dreams into clear, achievable objectives. Using the SMART framework (**Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant** and **Timely**), Marku shows readers how to create goals that inspire action and lasting change. She emphasizes defining a clear “why,” writing goals down, breaking them into manageable steps and celebrating progress along the way. The book also explores mindset – letting go of self-doubt, fear and perfectionism – to help readers build confidence and live with purpose, abundance and fulfillment. It's a concise blueprint for focused, goal-driven living.

Discussion questions

- Which element of the SMART framework do you find most challenging to apply, and why?
- How can connecting your goals to a strong “why” improve your motivation and consistency?
- In what ways can celebrating small milestones influence your long-term success?

Ask the Expert

I've been eating healthier and moving more – why isn't the scale moving?

Great question – this is so common, and it doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong. When you start eating healthier and moving more, your body often makes internal changes before the scale reflects progress. You may be gaining muscle, which is denser than fat, or holding extra water as your body adapts to new routines. Hormones, sleep, stress and even digestion can cause temporary weight fluctuations. The real wins – better energy, improved mood, stronger workouts – often show up first. Stay consistent, measure progress in multiple ways (like how clothes fit or stamina) and give your body time to recalibrate. The scale will eventually catch up.



Cervical Cancer: Key Facts Every Woman Should Know

Cervical cancer remains a major global health concern and is often called a “silent killer” because it shows no early symptoms. Most cases are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), a common virus spread through sexual activity, and certain high-risk strains can lead to cervical cancer. Fortunately, cervical cancer is highly preventable through HPV vaccination and routine Pap tests, which detect abnormal cells early. While most HPV infections clear on their own, factors like smoking, long-term oral contraceptive use, being overweight and family history increase risk. As cervical cancer progresses, symptoms such as pelvic pain, abnormal bleeding or unusual discharge may appear. Emerging genomics and immunotherapy research continues to drive new treatment advances.

National Fun at Work Day

National Fun at Work Day is celebrated on the last Friday of January – January 30 in 2026 – to help employees relax, spark creativity and strengthen team bonds. Celebrate with games, yoga, themed events, cookie decorating, gratitude notes or casual gatherings. To bring more joy to your workplace, try starting a monthly micro-fun moment, setting up a snack or puzzle station, creating a kindness wall or hosting quick walk-and-talk breaks. Most importantly, don't wait for the calendar – choose one simple idea and put it into motion this week. A small step toward fun can create a big shift in energy, connection and culture.

Preventive Health

Health Goals and New Habits

January is a time when many people want to reset their health goals and start new habits for a new year. The key to getting new goals to stick with you is to pick objectives that matter to you and choose one goal at a time. Developing new healthy habits is often difficult because results aren't seen immediately. Good, healthy habits have long-term, often delayed rewards and results. Be patient and keep long-term results in mind! Talk with your primary care provider for guidance on which healthy goals would be best for you because they are familiar with your health needs and medical history.

Some of the most common goals for a new year are to:

- **Increase physical activity:** Build strength and endurance over time. Aim for 30 minutes moderate activity each day.
- **Eat healthier:** Increase water intake. Limit alcohol consumption. Increase fruits and vegetables. Avoid sugary beverages, baked goods and fried foods.
- **Improve sleep:** Develop a nightly routine. Optimize sleep environment. Aim for seven hours or more each night.

Slow Cooker Beef and Freekeh Soup

Total time: 7 hr. 35 min. | Prep time: 10 min.
Cook time: 7 hr. 25 min. | Serves: 4

Ingredients:

2 tsp. olive oil

500g blade steak, fat trimmed and cut into 1/2 inch cubes

1 large brown onion, finely chopped

2 medium carrots, finely chopped

3 sticks celery, finely chopped

3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1 tbsp. fresh oregano, chopped

1 can (400g) diced tomatoes

3 cups reduced-sodium beef stock

1/2 cup dry freekeh, rinsed and drained

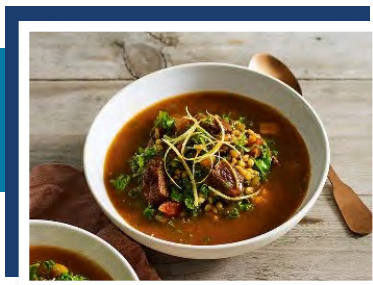
75g kale, trimmed and chopped

Instructions:

1. Heat half the oil in a large non-stick frying pan over medium-high heat. Cook beef, in batches, turning for 3-4 minutes or until browned. Transfer to a 4.5-litre (18-cup) slow cooker.
2. Heat remaining oil in same pan over medium heat. Cook onion, carrot and celery, stirring, for 5 minutes or until softened. Add garlic and oregano and cook, stirring, for 1 minute or until fragrant. Add tomatoes and stock and bring to the boil. Transfer to slow cooker. Stir in freekeh and 2 cups (500ml) water.
3. Cook, covered, on low for 7 hours. Stir in kale and cook, covered, on low for 15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Serving suggestion:

Serve with lemon zest, if desired. **TIP:** Suitable to freeze for up to 2 months.



Monthly Observances

Cervical Health Awareness

National Blood Donor

Thyroid Awareness

Glaucoma Awareness

Jan. 3 International Mind-Body Wellness Day

Jan. 22 Celebration of Life Day

Jan. 24 National Compliment Day

Jan. 30 National Fun at Work Day

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