

Creating a Life Plan

What is a Life Plan?

A life plan is a roadmap to help you get the things that mean the most to you. A life plan is built around personal goals and dreams. The goals can be things such as going back to school or work, volunteering, traveling to a place you always wanted to visit, or spending time with family. Here are other examples of personal goals.

- Health and well-being
 - Make healthier meals
 - Join a yoga or dance class
- Community
 - Volunteer at a local non-profit organization
 - Attend church and join activities



Should I Have a Life Plan?

Yes! All people should have a life plan. That includes individuals with kidney disease.

Is my life plan the same as my dialysis care plan?

Your dialysis care plan is about your kidney care and health. The goals focus on things like your dialysis routine and your treatment choice. For example, the plan could have goals about moving from in-center to home dialysis or getting a transplant. The plan could also include your medicines, kidney diet, treatments for other health conditions, daily exercise, and social connections.

Your life plan is about personal goals, like travel. Many times, your dialysis care plan can help you achieve your life plan. For example, you may want to travel around the country and visit all the national parks. But you don't want to stop in a different city three times a week for dialysis. You can talk with your healthcare team about the possibility of peritoneal dialysis to give yourself flexibility.

Why should I write down my goals?

By writing down your goals, you create a contract with yourself. At first, this might seem silly, but once you get started, you will see how putting your goals in writing helps you achieve them.

Here are reasons to put your goals in writing:

- Helps you figure out what you want
 - You might start to write your goal one way and find yourself erasing what you wrote and starting over. That's okay! The writing helps you see what you really want to achieve.
- Motivates you to act:
 - Much like a to-do list, writing goals becomes an action plan.
- Lets you see your progress and celebrate your accomplishments.

Will my life plan change?

A life plan is always changing because life circumstances are ever changing. Visit your life plan regularly. Check off the goals you have achieved. Look at the goals that you are still working on. Ask yourself what you need to do to reach them. Maybe the goals have changed, or maybe you have a new goal. If so, change your life plan to match. Be sure to back up your goals with steps to achieve them. Talk with your dialysis care team and family about how they can work with you to reach your goals. Let's get to work and make a life plan!

Creating a Life Plan Worksheet

Steps to Creating a Life Plan	Questions to Ask Myself
Step 1 Identify Your Personal Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are my personal goals? What have I always wanted to do and keep putting off? • What do I want to achieve in my life? Why do I want to do this? • What is the benefit of reaching my goals? • What is stopping me from achieving my goals? • Are my goals realistic?
Make notes here:	
Step 2 Figure Out How to Reach Your Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I know what it will take to reach my goals? What steps do I need to take? • Who can help me? • What things might slow me down? • How do I want my goals to look when they are complete?
Make notes here:	
Step 3 Define the Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When am I going to start working on my goals? • When do I want to reach these goals?
Make notes here:	
Step 4 Stay on Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How am I going to check my progress? • Who can help me stay on target as I work toward my goals? • How will I know if I need to make changes in my plan or goals? • How will I know I've met my goals?
Make notes here:	
Step 5 Celebrate Your Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has helped me reach my goals? Who can I invite to celebrate my success?
Make notes here:	
Step 6 Always Keep Making New Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are new goals to add to my life plan? • How can I help others create a life plan, so they too can achieve their goals?

Implementing a Life Plan

Taking Action with Your Life Plan!

Once you have identified your life plan goals, the next step is to start making your goals happen. Moving from planning to action can be hard. There are many ways to begin taking action. It is likely that you that have more than one goal and that's okay! First, you will need to decide which goal you want to begin working on. Writing down your goals can help you focus on what is important to you. Describe your goal in detail. The more detail you can include, the better. Include a time frame and select dates you can achieve your activities. Break down your goals into smaller pieces. Think about the smaller pieces as part of your bigger goal. Begin working on one of the smaller pieces. As you complete each piece you will be moving closer to achieving your goal. Be sure to store your life plan somewhere you can easily find it and work on it every day.



These are a few simple steps to get started:

- Select your most important goal.
- Ask yourself, what do I need to do to achieve this goal?
- Know what resources you will need to make your goal happen. Resources can be things like:
 - Transportation to attend a class or card game
 - Financial assistance to go back to school (visit the Patient Grant Library on the [ESRD NCC website](#))
 - Friends and family to support your goal
- Think about who you can count on for support.
- Determine when you can start working on your goal.
- Know how much time you can dedicate to working on your goal.
- Decide if your goal will need financial resources and know how much to save each week to make your goal happen.
- Set a date to achieve your goal. Make sure it is realistic.
- Celebrate your accomplishments each step of they way!

Goals can big or small. They can simple or hard. There is no right or wrong goal. Your goals are personal and matter to you. For example, you may want to walk more. Begin by walking when you receive a phone call. You can begin doing this every time you answer the phone. Unless you need support to walk, you can achieve this goal without support. A simple goal with big rewards!

Ask for Support

- Share your life plan goals and timeline with family members or a friend. Let them know what else you need to do to meet your goal.
- Ask family or friends to help you stay motivated as you work toward your goal. Invite them to celebrate your success with you.
- If you're having trouble staying on track, ask a friend or a family member to help you stay on track. This can assist you with achieving your life plan goals.¹
- Asking for help from others to keep yourself on track, even signing up for free newsletters or joining social media groups are ways you can get ongoing support.



For example, if you want to lose weight, ask a friend or family member to walk with you several times a week. Maybe there is a chair yoga class at your community center. Ask a friend to help you find one and to join you in the class. Establish a routine and ask family or friends to be part of it.

Sharing your life plan goals with your care team is also important. Your care plan should always support your life plan goals. For example, if your life plan goal is to continue working, ask your care team about your home dialysis and transplant options. Ask yourself what resources you need to make your plans stick. Check with your care team about available resources and use those resources in your life plan.

In Review

- Write your goals down
- Keep your goals in a safe place that you frequently check
- Tell family and friends your goals and ask them to support you
- Share your life plan goals with your care team

Be sure to check-in with yourself on a regular basis. You will want to be sure you're sticking to your goals. If you find yourself drifting away from your goals, reach out to a friend or family member and let them help you stay on track.

If you miss a goal or it takes longer, don't give up. Revise your life plan and adjust as necessary. Most important, celebrate your success, and reward yourself for meeting a goal.



Staying on Track With Your Life Plan

Now that you have created a life plan and started making your goals happen, it's time to work on staying on track with your life plan goals. Use this resource to select how you will stay on target to meet your life goals and enhance your quality of life.

How am I going to check my progress?

- Use a paper desk calendar or your phone calendar to track milestones
- Set up calendar reminders on your phone for a specific time each week to review
- Make a to-do list to track progress toward your goal and check it regularly
- Make sure your plan is visible to you daily (e.g., taped to your bathroom mirror, on your refrigerator, next to your medicine box, or on your car dashboard)

Who can help me stay on target as I work toward my goals?

Ask someone you trust to discuss your goals with you every few weeks or at least once a month. This person can be a:

- Social worker from the facility
- Close friend or family member
- Peer support group member
- Peer mentor or other dialysis patient at your dialysis facility
- Mental health professional
- Other

How will I know if I need to make changes in my plan or goals?

As your life changes, you may need to change or update your life goals.

- You may experience a major event in your life, like moving, loss of caregiver support, or financial changes
- Feeling like your plan or goal is not something you are looking forward to or it is causing you stress
- If you are struggling to reach your goal:
 - Take a break, review the goal, and change the goal if needed
 - Ask people you trust for their ideas on what you can do

How will I know I've met my goals?

- Assign dates to each goal or each step in achieving a goal
- Once the goal has been met, check it off your to-do-list

What do I do next?

- Celebrate!
- Share your success with others
- Come up with new goals you want to work toward
- Encourage others to set life plan goals (i.e., your caregiver)