



Diabetes: A Family Matter

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Overview

Volunteer *SUGAR Helpers* can use these ideas to get a personal activity plan going if they do not already have one. This activity sheet has many different ideas for getting moving and having fun while doing it. Look over the ideas. Consider ways to increase physical activity and share the time with others. Be creative and find ways to involve young and old, families, grandparents and grandchildren, friends, and neighbors. Get the whole gang involved and find new ways to be physically active together. Volunteers can also share these ideas with their own family members, friends, and groups where they belong.

The truth is we all need to find ways to bring physical activity into our lives. Some may have negative thoughts about needs to increase physical activity. Others might think it is out of reach or hopeless. Still others may think they are just too out of shape to even try. Some might be embarrassed to try to exercise in front of others. Others might think the entire idea of getting active as boring or uninteresting. A few might think they just do not need to worry about it because it will not make any difference. The good news is that no matter where we are in our activity level, we can all be successful and become more fit. Even small steps can lead to big rewards.

Finding ways to make physical activity fun and a shared family experience is an important way to get started and keep you going. Many ways to get more active exist. Some things can be done alone, but it can be more fun when we share these times

with those we love and those we enjoy spending time. As you set your personal goals try to aim for two things. First, increase the number of times you engage in activity each day and increase the length of time during the day that you are active. Second, aim to increase the intensity of the activity or how much energy it takes to do the activity. Doing a little more each day and using a bit more energy is what is needed.

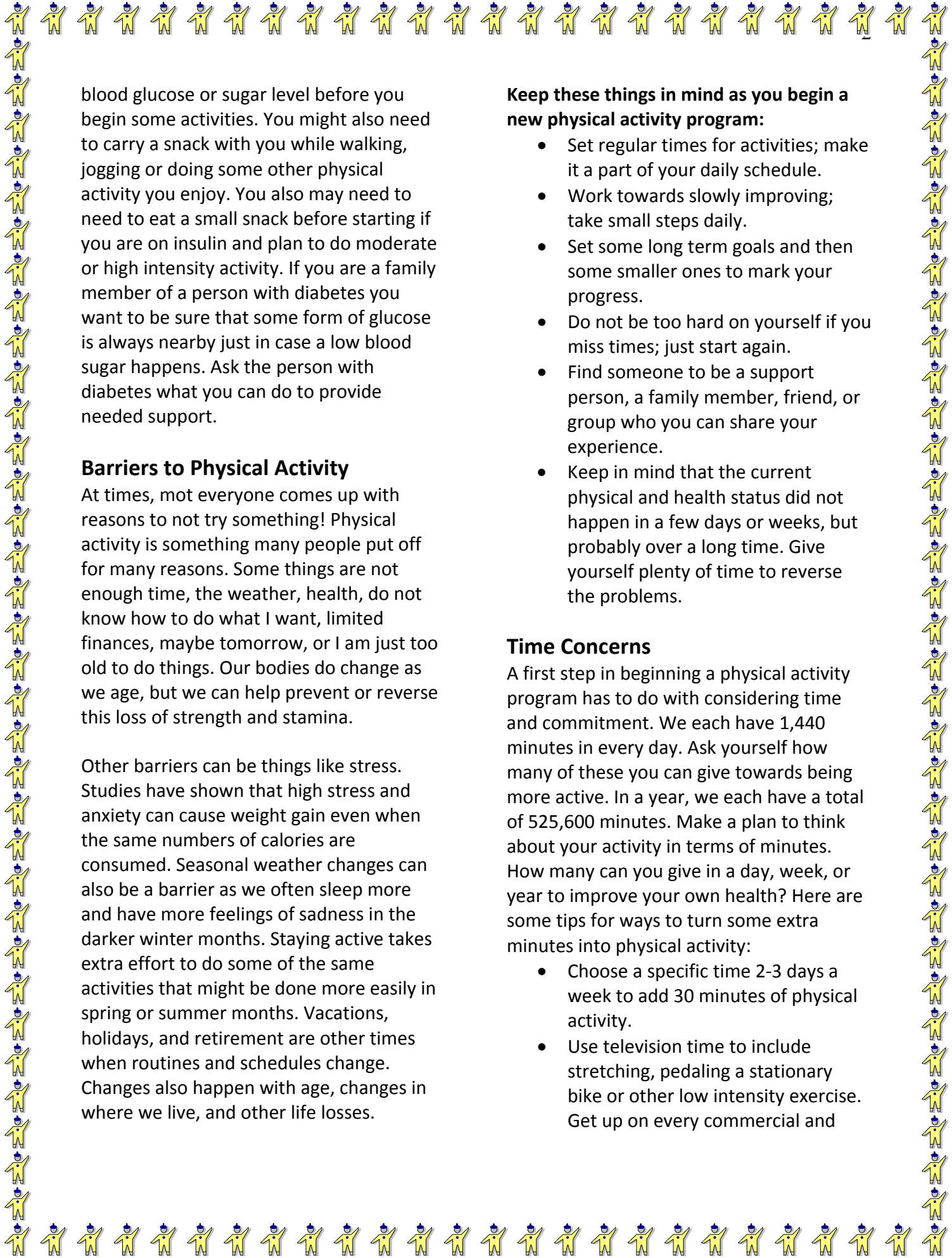
Why Be Active?

Studies have shown that increasing physical activity to 30 minutes and doing this 3 to 5 times a week can be beneficial to one's overall health. The activity does not have to be highly intensive like an aerobics class, but a more moderate activity such as a brisk walk. Finding ways to increase your activity by even a little each day has **BIG** health rewards.

Medical Guidance

If you have been mostly sitting and cannot climb a set of stairs without getting short of breath then it might be a good idea to see your doctor before starting any rigorous activity. Talk to your doctor and find out what kinds of activity would be best. Our current health status, diabetes control, meal times, medications, or any other conditions make a difference in what we should do.

Ask if there any things you should know and see what kinds of physical activity would be best for you. If you have diabetes, then you may need to take some extra steps. For example, you might need to check your



blood glucose or sugar level before you begin some activities. You might also need to carry a snack with you while walking, jogging or doing some other physical activity you enjoy. You also may need to need to eat a small snack before starting if you are on insulin and plan to do moderate or high intensity activity. If you are a family member of a person with diabetes you want to be sure that some form of glucose is always nearby just in case a low blood sugar happens. Ask the person with diabetes what you can do to provide needed support.

Barriers to Physical Activity

At times, not everyone comes up with reasons to not try something! Physical activity is something many people put off for many reasons. Some things are not enough time, the weather, health, do not know how to do what I want, limited finances, maybe tomorrow, or I am just too old to do things. Our bodies do change as we age, but we can help prevent or reverse this loss of strength and stamina.

Other barriers can be things like stress. Studies have shown that high stress and anxiety can cause weight gain even when the same numbers of calories are consumed. Seasonal weather changes can also be a barrier as we often sleep more and have more feelings of sadness in the darker winter months. Staying active takes extra effort to do some of the same activities that might be done more easily in spring or summer months. Vacations, holidays, and retirement are other times when routines and schedules change. Changes also happen with age, changes in where we live, and other life losses.

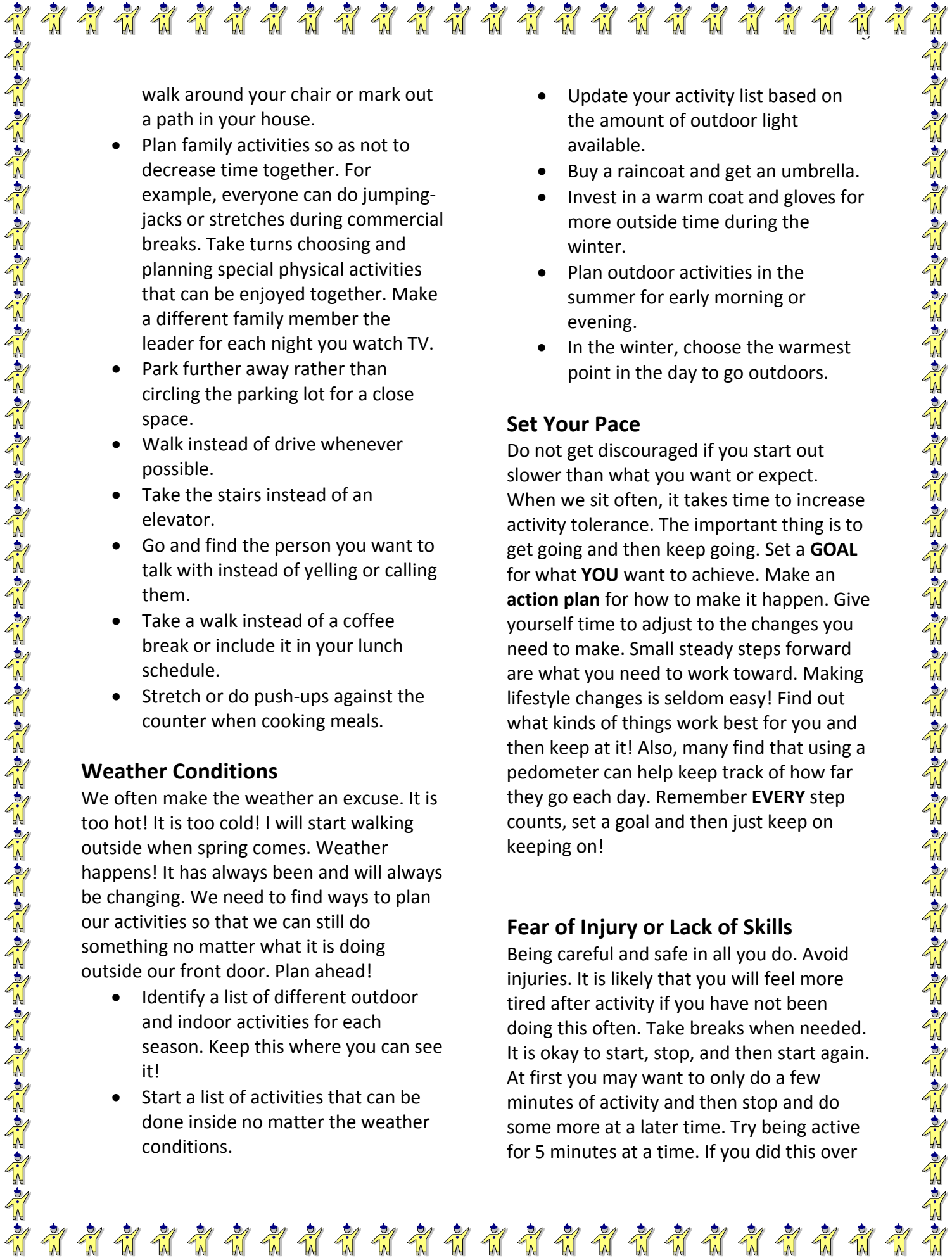
Keep these things in mind as you begin a new physical activity program:

- Set regular times for activities; make it a part of your daily schedule.
- Work towards slowly improving; take small steps daily.
- Set some long term goals and then some smaller ones to mark your progress.
- Do not be too hard on yourself if you miss times; just start again.
- Find someone to be a support person, a family member, friend, or group who you can share your experience.
- Keep in mind that the current physical and health status did not happen in a few days or weeks, but probably over a long time. Give yourself plenty of time to reverse the problems.

Time Concerns

A first step in beginning a physical activity program has to do with considering time and commitment. We each have 1,440 minutes in every day. Ask yourself how many of these you can give towards being more active. In a year, we each have a total of 525,600 minutes. Make a plan to think about your activity in terms of minutes. How many can you give in a day, week, or year to improve your own health? Here are some tips for ways to turn some extra minutes into physical activity:

- Choose a specific time 2-3 days a week to add 30 minutes of physical activity.
- Use television time to include stretching, pedaling a stationary bike or other low intensity exercise. Get up on every commercial and



walk around your chair or mark out a path in your house.

- Plan family activities so as not to decrease time together. For example, everyone can do jumping-jacks or stretches during commercial breaks. Take turns choosing and planning special physical activities that can be enjoyed together. Make a different family member the leader for each night you watch TV.
- Park further away rather than circling the parking lot for a close space.
- Walk instead of drive whenever possible.
- Take the stairs instead of an elevator.
- Go and find the person you want to talk with instead of yelling or calling them.
- Take a walk instead of a coffee break or include it in your lunch schedule.
- Stretch or do push-ups against the counter when cooking meals.

Weather Conditions

We often make the weather an excuse. It is too hot! It is too cold! I will start walking outside when spring comes. Weather happens! It has always been and will always be changing. We need to find ways to plan our activities so that we can still do something no matter what it is doing outside our front door. Plan ahead!

- Identify a list of different outdoor and indoor activities for each season. Keep this where you can see it!
- Start a list of activities that can be done inside no matter the weather conditions.

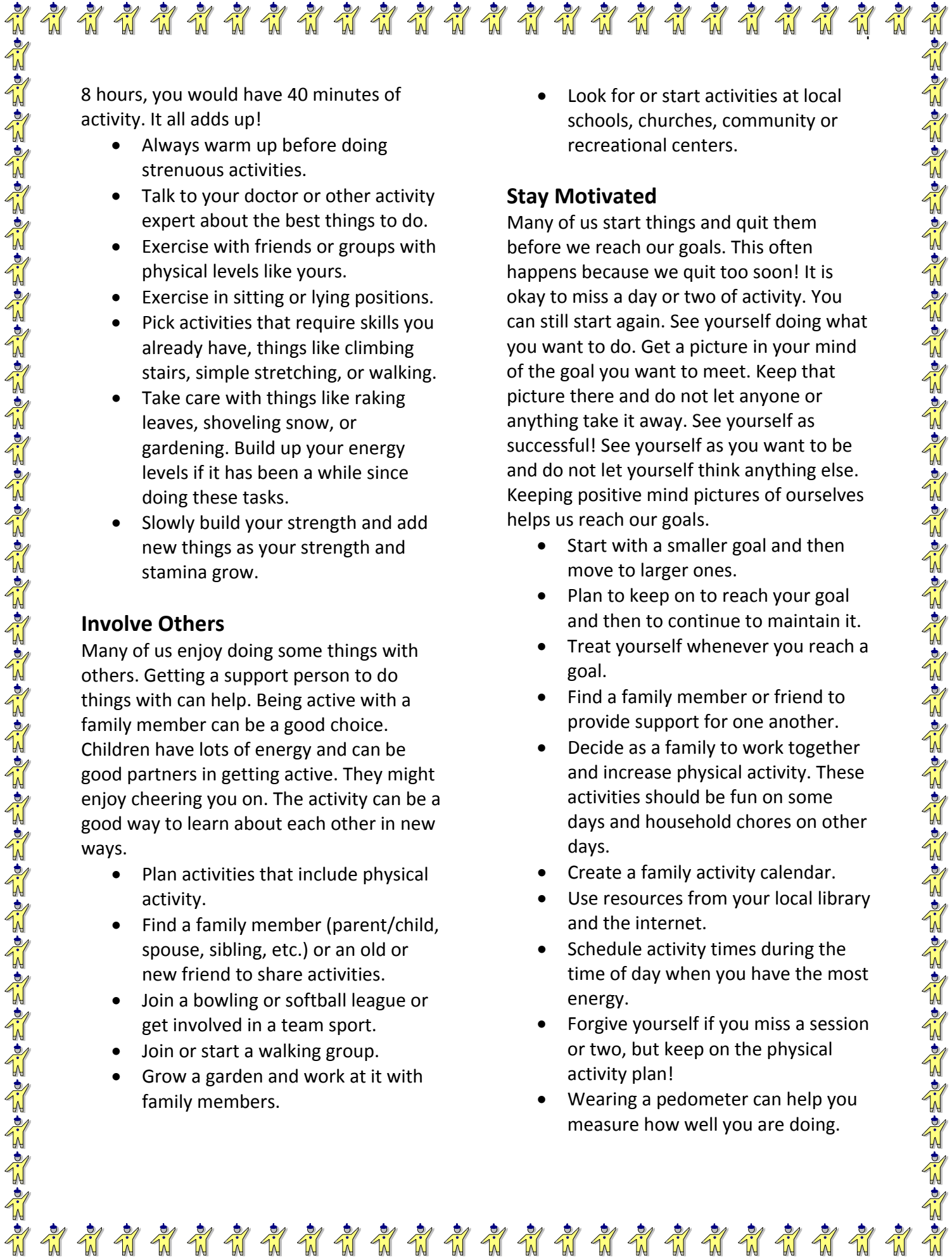
- Update your activity list based on the amount of outdoor light available.
- Buy a raincoat and get an umbrella.
- Invest in a warm coat and gloves for more outside time during the winter.
- Plan outdoor activities in the summer for early morning or evening.
- In the winter, choose the warmest point in the day to go outdoors.

Set Your Pace

Do not get discouraged if you start out slower than what you want or expect. When we sit often, it takes time to increase activity tolerance. The important thing is to get going and then keep going. Set a **GOAL** for what **YOU** want to achieve. Make an **action plan** for how to make it happen. Give yourself time to adjust to the changes you need to make. Small steady steps forward are what you need to work toward. Making lifestyle changes is seldom easy! Find out what kinds of things work best for you and then keep at it! Also, many find that using a pedometer can help keep track of how far they go each day. Remember **EVERY** step counts, set a goal and then just keep on keeping on!

Fear of Injury or Lack of Skills

Being careful and safe in all you do. Avoid injuries. It is likely that you will feel more tired after activity if you have not been doing this often. Take breaks when needed. It is okay to start, stop, and then start again. At first you may want to only do a few minutes of activity and then stop and do some more at a later time. Try being active for 5 minutes at a time. If you did this over



8 hours, you would have 40 minutes of activity. It all adds up!

- Always warm up before doing strenuous activities.
- Talk to your doctor or other activity expert about the best things to do.
- Exercise with friends or groups with physical levels like yours.
- Exercise in sitting or lying positions.
- Pick activities that require skills you already have, things like climbing stairs, simple stretching, or walking.
- Take care with things like raking leaves, shoveling snow, or gardening. Build up your energy levels if it has been a while since doing these tasks.
- Slowly build your strength and add new things as your strength and stamina grow.

Involve Others

Many of us enjoy doing some things with others. Getting a support person to do things with can help. Being active with a family member can be a good choice. Children have lots of energy and can be good partners in getting active. They might enjoy cheering you on. The activity can be a good way to learn about each other in new ways.

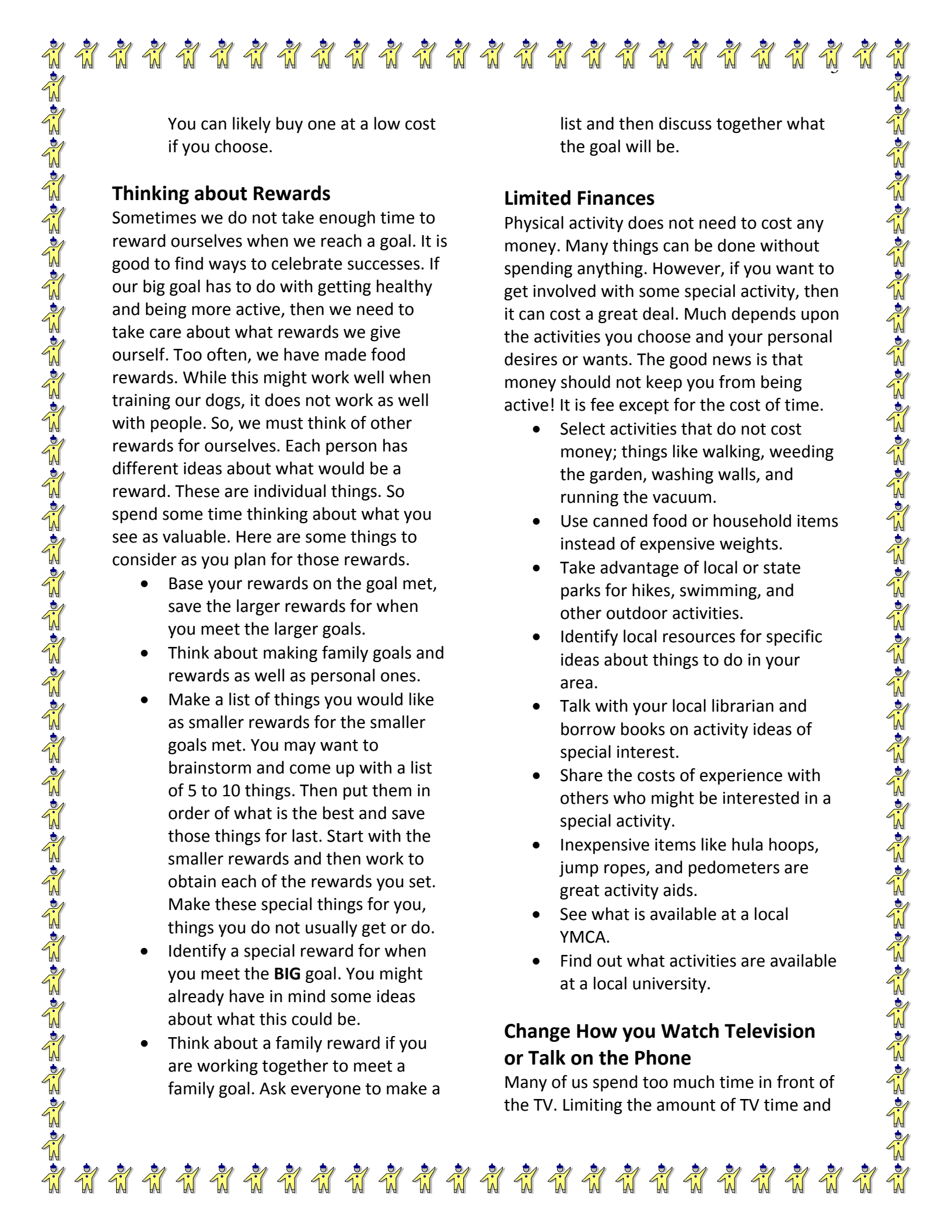
- Plan activities that include physical activity.
- Find a family member (parent/child, spouse, sibling, etc.) or an old or new friend to share activities.
- Join a bowling or softball league or get involved in a team sport.
- Join or start a walking group.
- Grow a garden and work at it with family members.

- Look for or start activities at local schools, churches, community or recreational centers.

Stay Motivated

Many of us start things and quit them before we reach our goals. This often happens because we quit too soon! It is okay to miss a day or two of activity. You can still start again. See yourself doing what you want to do. Get a picture in your mind of the goal you want to meet. Keep that picture there and do not let anyone or anything take it away. See yourself as successful! See yourself as you want to be and do not let yourself think anything else. Keeping positive mind pictures of ourselves helps us reach our goals.

- Start with a smaller goal and then move to larger ones.
- Plan to keep on to reach your goal and then to continue to maintain it.
- Treat yourself whenever you reach a goal.
- Find a family member or friend to provide support for one another.
- Decide as a family to work together and increase physical activity. These activities should be fun on some days and household chores on other days.
- Create a family activity calendar.
- Use resources from your local library and the internet.
- Schedule activity times during the time of day when you have the most energy.
- Forgive yourself if you miss a session or two, but keep on the physical activity plan!
- Wearing a pedometer can help you measure how well you are doing.



You can likely buy one at a low cost if you choose.

Thinking about Rewards

Sometimes we do not take enough time to reward ourselves when we reach a goal. It is good to find ways to celebrate successes. If our big goal has to do with getting healthy and being more active, then we need to take care about what rewards we give ourselves. Too often, we have made food rewards. While this might work well when training our dogs, it does not work as well with people. So, we must think of other rewards for ourselves. Each person has different ideas about what would be a reward. These are individual things. So spend some time thinking about what you see as valuable. Here are some things to consider as you plan for those rewards.

- Base your rewards on the goal met, save the larger rewards for when you meet the larger goals.
- Think about making family goals and rewards as well as personal ones.
- Make a list of things you would like as smaller rewards for the smaller goals met. You may want to brainstorm and come up with a list of 5 to 10 things. Then put them in order of what is the best and save those things for last. Start with the smaller rewards and then work to obtain each of the rewards you set. Make these special things for you, things you do not usually get or do.
- Identify a special reward for when you meet the **BIG** goal. You might already have in mind some ideas about what this could be.
- Think about a family reward if you are working together to meet a family goal. Ask everyone to make a

list and then discuss together what the goal will be.

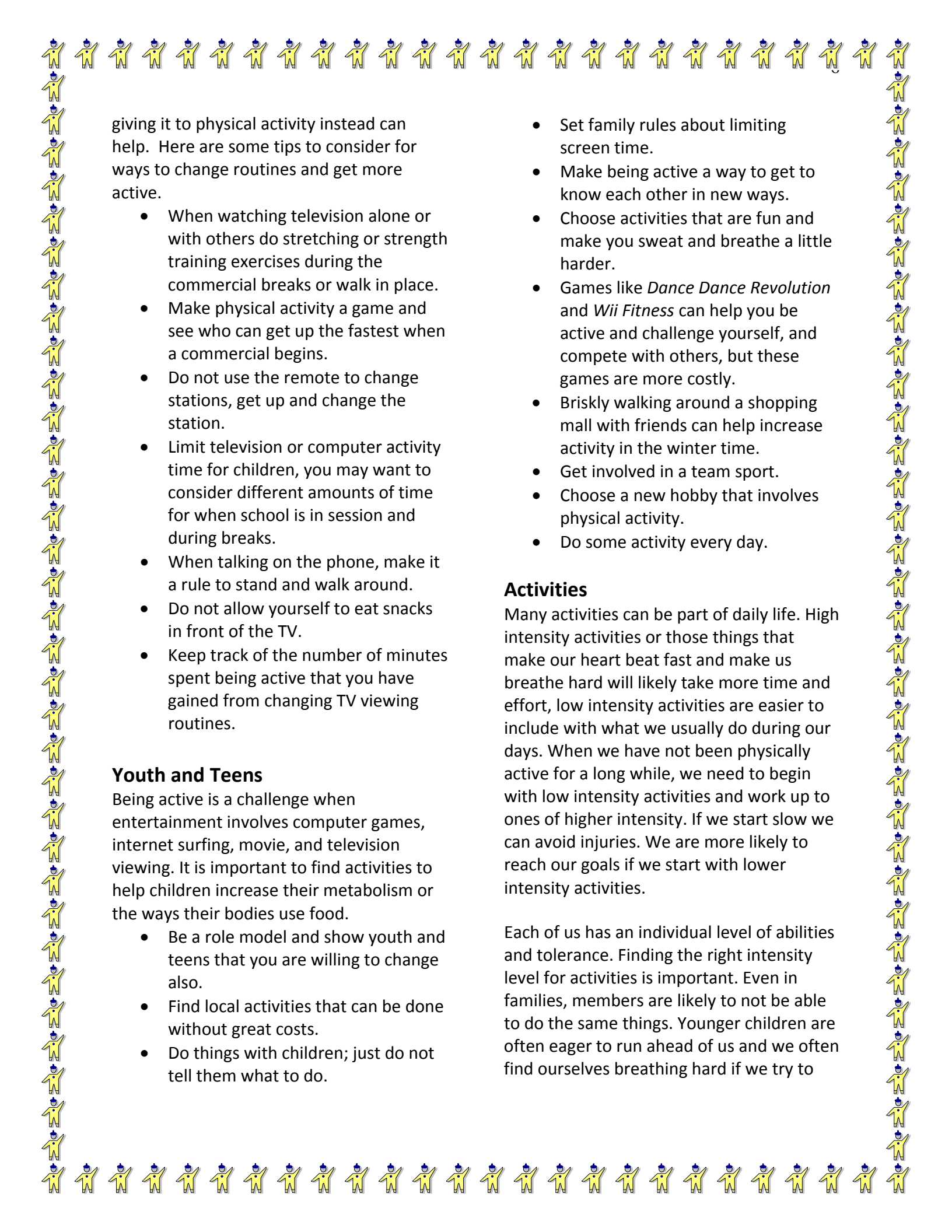
Limited Finances

Physical activity does not need to cost any money. Many things can be done without spending anything. However, if you want to get involved with some special activity, then it can cost a great deal. Much depends upon the activities you choose and your personal desires or wants. The good news is that money should not keep you from being active! It is free except for the cost of time.

- Select activities that do not cost money; things like walking, weeding the garden, washing walls, and running the vacuum.
- Use canned food or household items instead of expensive weights.
- Take advantage of local or state parks for hikes, swimming, and other outdoor activities.
- Identify local resources for specific ideas about things to do in your area.
- Talk with your local librarian and borrow books on activity ideas of special interest.
- Share the costs of experience with others who might be interested in a special activity.
- Inexpensive items like hula hoops, jump ropes, and pedometers are great activity aids.
- See what is available at a local YMCA.
- Find out what activities are available at a local university.

Change How you Watch Television or Talk on the Phone

Many of us spend too much time in front of the TV. Limiting the amount of TV time and



giving it to physical activity instead can help. Here are some tips to consider for ways to change routines and get more active.

- When watching television alone or with others do stretching or strength training exercises during the commercial breaks or walk in place.
- Make physical activity a game and see who can get up the fastest when a commercial begins.
- Do not use the remote to change stations, get up and change the station.
- Limit television or computer activity time for children, you may want to consider different amounts of time for when school is in session and during breaks.
- When talking on the phone, make it a rule to stand and walk around.
- Do not allow yourself to eat snacks in front of the TV.
- Keep track of the number of minutes spent being active that you have gained from changing TV viewing routines.

Youth and Teens

Being active is a challenge when entertainment involves computer games, internet surfing, movie, and television viewing. It is important to find activities to help children increase their metabolism or the ways their bodies use food.

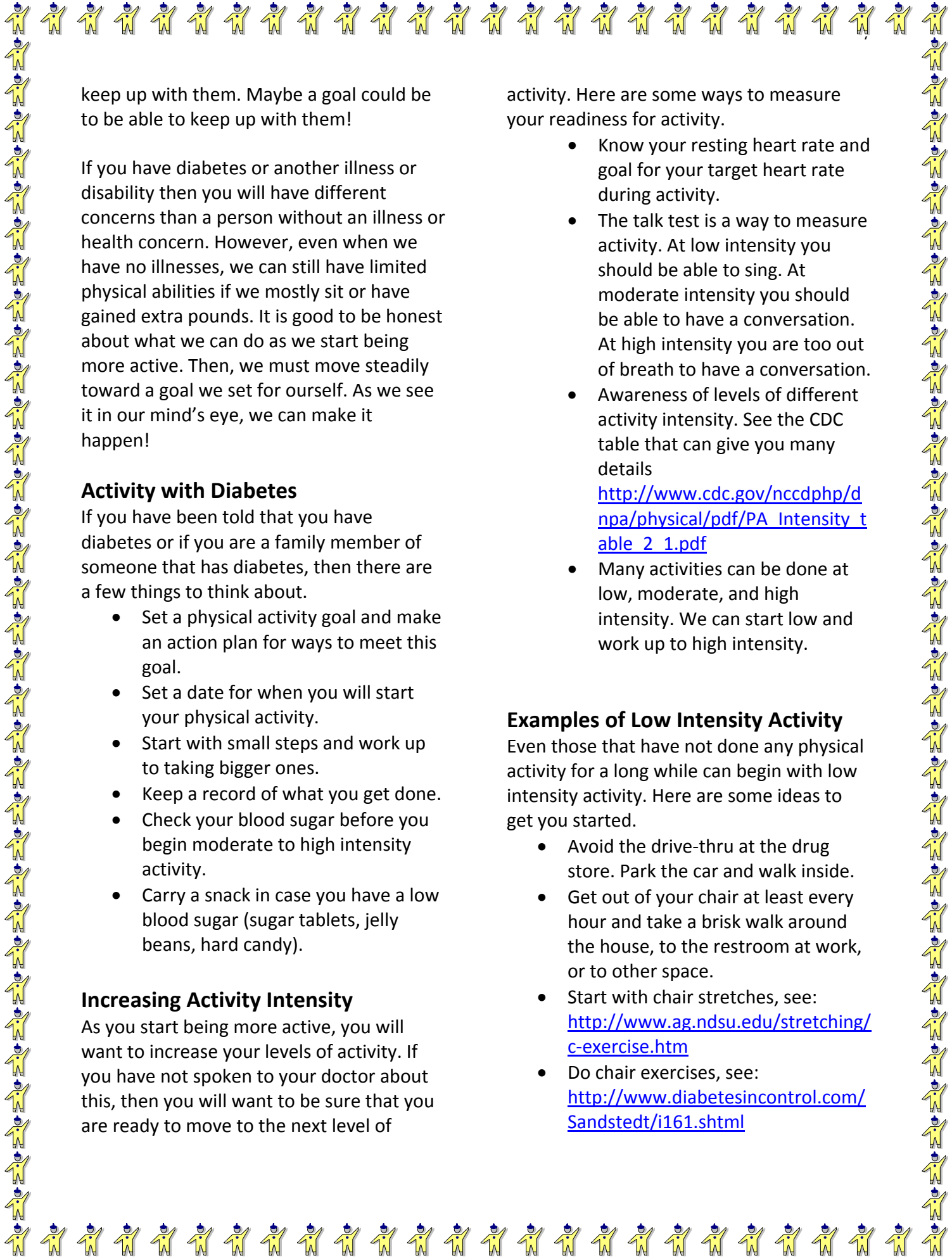
- Be a role model and show youth and teens that you are willing to change also.
- Find local activities that can be done without great costs.
- Do things with children; just do not tell them what to do.

- Set family rules about limiting screen time.
- Make being active a way to get to know each other in new ways.
- Choose activities that are fun and make you sweat and breathe a little harder.
- Games like *Dance Dance Revolution* and *Wii Fitness* can help you be active and challenge yourself, and compete with others, but these games are more costly.
- Briskly walking around a shopping mall with friends can help increase activity in the winter time.
- Get involved in a team sport.
- Choose a new hobby that involves physical activity.
- Do some activity every day.

Activities

Many activities can be part of daily life. High intensity activities or those things that make our heart beat fast and make us breathe hard will likely take more time and effort, low intensity activities are easier to include with what we usually do during our days. When we have not been physically active for a long while, we need to begin with low intensity activities and work up to ones of higher intensity. If we start slow we can avoid injuries. We are more likely to reach our goals if we start with lower intensity activities.

Each of us has an individual level of abilities and tolerance. Finding the right intensity level for activities is important. Even in families, members are likely to not be able to do the same things. Younger children are often eager to run ahead of us and we often find ourselves breathing hard if we try to



keep up with them. Maybe a goal could be to be able to keep up with them!

If you have diabetes or another illness or disability then you will have different concerns than a person without an illness or health concern. However, even when we have no illnesses, we can still have limited physical abilities if we mostly sit or have gained extra pounds. It is good to be honest about what we can do as we start being more active. Then, we must move steadily toward a goal we set for ourself. As we see it in our mind's eye, we can make it happen!

Activity with Diabetes

If you have been told that you have diabetes or if you are a family member of someone that has diabetes, then there are a few things to think about.

- Set a physical activity goal and make an action plan for ways to meet this goal.
- Set a date for when you will start your physical activity.
- Start with small steps and work up to taking bigger ones.
- Keep a record of what you get done.
- Check your blood sugar before you begin moderate to high intensity activity.
- Carry a snack in case you have a low blood sugar (sugar tablets, jelly beans, hard candy).

Increasing Activity Intensity

As you start being more active, you will want to increase your levels of activity. If you have not spoken to your doctor about this, then you will want to be sure that you are ready to move to the next level of

activity. Here are some ways to measure your readiness for activity.

- Know your resting heart rate and goal for your target heart rate during activity.
- The talk test is a way to measure activity. At low intensity you should be able to sing. At moderate intensity you should be able to have a conversation. At high intensity you are too out of breath to have a conversation.
- Awareness of levels of different activity intensity. See the CDC table that can give you many details
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/pdf/PA_Intensity_table_2_1.pdf
- Many activities can be done at low, moderate, and high intensity. We can start low and work up to high intensity.

Examples of Low Intensity Activity

Even those that have not done any physical activity for a long while can begin with low intensity activity. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- Avoid the drive-thru at the drug store. Park the car and walk inside.
- Get out of your chair at least every hour and take a brisk walk around the house, to the restroom at work, or to other space.
- Start with chair stretches, see: <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/stretching/c-exercise.htm>
- Do chair exercises, see: <http://www.diabetesincontrol.com/Sandstedt/i161.shtml>

- Exaggerate movements when doing household chores and include stretching.
- Take a look at this manual on chair exercises from the National Institute on Aging, Tufts University:

<http://www.livewellagewell.info/study/2007/12-ChairExercisesUGA113006.pdf>

- Take stairs instead of elevator.
- Carry each item at home up the stairs so that you make several trips during a day.
- Walk slowly, bicycle, use a golf cart while playing golf, swim, wash the car, dust, vacuum, rake leaves, weed flower-bed, garden.

Examples of Moderate Intensity Activity

Many of the things started as low intensity activities can increase so that they become moderate intensity. Gaining the ability to do moderate intensity activity is a major feat! Activity at this level at least 3 to 5 times weekly or for a total of 150 minutes a week can be a **BIG** goal. Reaching this level of activity and intensity deserves a **BIG** reward. Here are some examples of moderate activities.

- Moderate intensity chair exercises.
- Chair dancing.
- Briskly walking two miles in 30 minutes on mostly flat ground.
- Wheeling self in a wheelchair for 30 minutes.
- Carry or rolling golf clubs.
- 30 minutes of water aerobics.
- Push a stroller for 30 minutes.
- Swim laps for 20 minutes.
- Mow lawn with push power mower.
- Play doubles in tennis.

- Jump rope for 10-15 minutes.
- Jog a 10 minute mile.

Examples of High Intensity Activities

This is the level of activity that would be the **GREAT BIG** goal. While some can reach this level, others may not. Keep in mind that we do not need to compete with others. We just need to get active and stay that way. If you never did some of these high intensity activities when you were young then it will be a major challenge to do them later in life, but **NOT** impossible. If you did these things in the past then as you get more fit, in time you might be able to do them again.

- Swim laps.
- Play tennis singles.
- Aerobic exercises.
- Bicycle more than 10 mph up a steep hill.
- Mow the lawn with a hand mower.
- Use a treadmill at a high steep and steep incline.

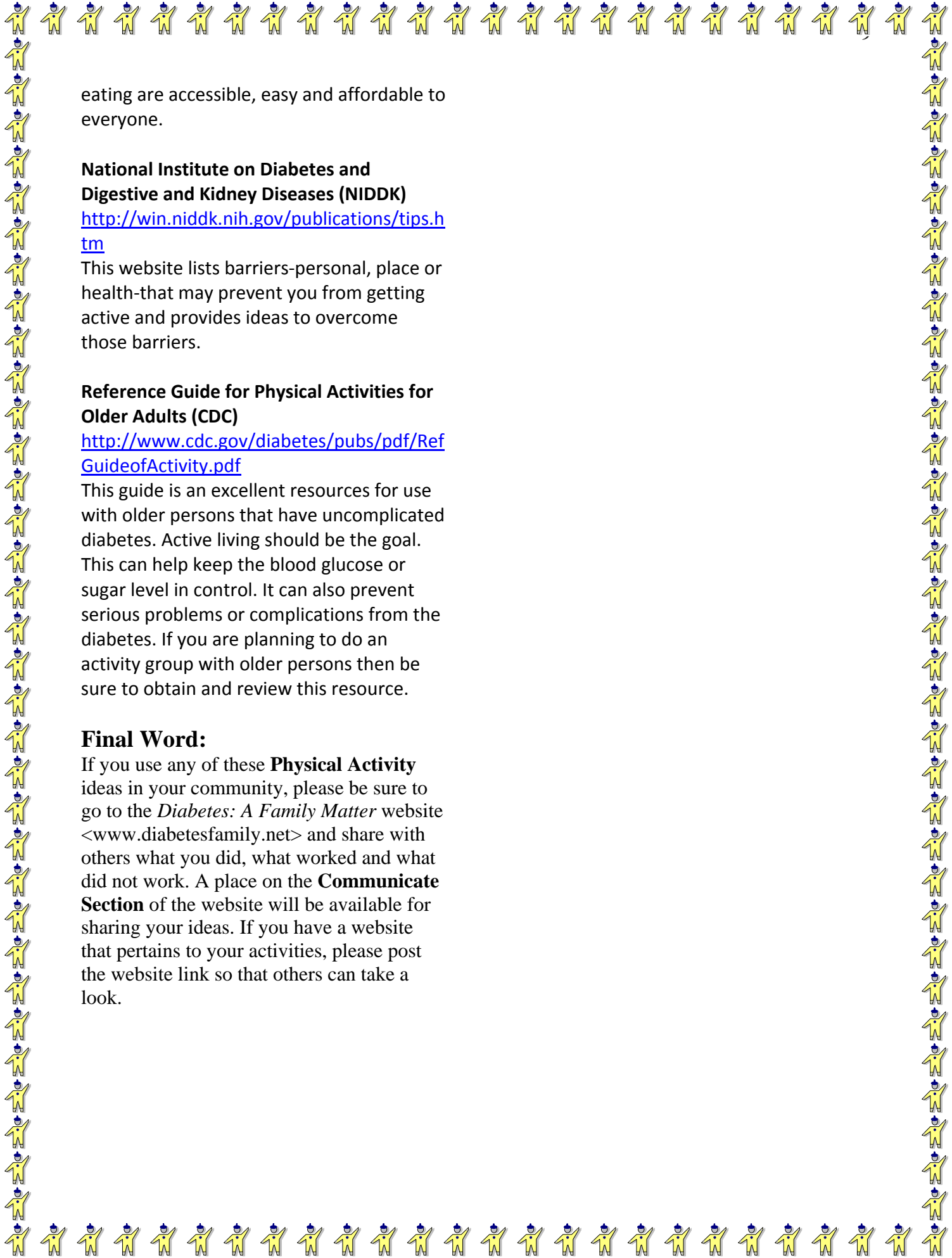
Resources

Only a few resources are listed here, but look on the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* website to find many other links related to physical activity. Take time to look on the Internet or at your local library for information about specific topics or activities that are of interest to you.

Active Living by Design (RWJ)

<http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/>

This website is about finding ways for communities to become healthier places. The idea is to find ways to construct cultures in local communities where active living and healthy eating are the goal. Their vision is to create healthy communities where routine physical activity and healthy



eating are accessible, easy and affordable to everyone.

National Institute on Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)

<http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/tips.htm>

This website lists barriers-personal, place or health-that may prevent you from getting active and provides ideas to overcome those barriers.

Reference Guide for Physical Activities for Older Adults (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/pdf/RefGuideofActivity.pdf>

This guide is an excellent resources for use with older persons that have uncomplicated diabetes. Active living should be the goal. This can help keep the blood glucose or sugar level in control. It can also prevent serious problems or complications from the diabetes. If you are planning to do an activity group with older persons then be sure to obtain and review this resource.

Final Word:

If you use any of these **Physical Activity** ideas in your community, please be sure to go to the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* website <www.diabetesfamily.net> and share with others what you did, what worked and what did not work. A place on the **Communicate Section** of the website will be available for sharing your ideas. If you have a website that pertains to your activities, please post the website link so that others can take a look.