



Plan Your Actions and Plan Your Healthy Routine

Wildland firefighters anticipate what is needed to succeed. Prior to fire season, we plan exercise and nutrition routines, and we plan activities during rest days. Now, fire season is at hand and the hours spent in the gym or running on the trails are about to pay off. Maybe we were at a gym five days a week. Ran Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and hiked Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. We probably ate better to get the most out of our efforts. These routines help us succeed to reach our goals. It might not be easy to develop these routines, but over time we can analyze our physical success and possibly apply it to other areas of our health and wellness.

Some Fast Facts from Mental Health America:

<https://screening.mhanational.org/content/8-steps-create-healthy-routine/>

- When it comes to diet, sleep, and exercise, high-quality routines are linked to mental and physical health.
- People with more daily routines have lower levels of distress when facing problems with their health or negative life events.
- It takes an average of 66 days for a behavior to become automatic (a habit), but for some people it can take as long as 8 ½ months. Don't give up!



Every firefighter develops specific routines that work for them. New routines may not be life changing. In fact, new routines may simply be small changes to things you do today. Think of things you already do and add something positive.

For example:

- Check the national situation report (<https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/sitreprt.pdf>) every morning.
- Take time to review an article from the Wildland Fire Lesson Learned Center (<https://www.wildfirelessons.net/home>).
- Instead of a second cup of coffee each morning, maybe drink a quart of water instead.
- Use a calendar (such as the pocket-sized Smokey Bear calendars) to track your successes.
- Plan a reward for yourself when you reach a goal.

If you miss a day, don't sweat it. Pick up your routine again tomorrow. Take what you develop now and create a routine to make a life-long positive change.



National Wildfire Coordinating Group

Risk Management Committee – Mental Health Subcommittee



Some Quick Tips for Success

- Create the routine that is right for you. Choose those things you like to do.
- Start small. It's easier to memorize the 10 Standard Firefighting Orders (<https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/110>) and 18 Watch Out Situations (<https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/118>) one at a time instead of all at once.
- Add to your existing habits. Build on what already works and make it better.
- Make swaps. Examine and exchange bad routines for good ones.
- Plan ahead. You know what happens when you plan a barbeque during fire season. Plan but have a contingency.
- Make time for things you enjoy. Schedules can be hectic, especially during fire season. You may have to delay gratification but make time for what you love.
- Don't beat yourself up if you miss a day. Tomorrow will come and that mountain will still need climbing.

These quick tips come from Mental Health America. A more complete toolkit is located at <https://mhanational.org/mental-health-month-2020-toolkit-download>.

