Join me in a semester long health intervention, designed to having lasting impacts on your health behaviors, and hopefully your health stock.

The first thing to do is decide on which health related behavior(s) you would like to change. Do you want to eat healthier, consume fewer calories, exercise more, or merely improve you adherence to doctor’s orders? One of the keys is to have an explicit measurable goal/outcome to achieve by May 15th, 2013.

By next week Tuesay (Feb 12th) I would like you bring to class a type written goal. This should have your name, and explicit goal written on the paper. How will you measure your success or failure at achieving your goal? What consequences can you credibly impose on yourself? I will ask you to report back on your progress a few times this semester.

**Example:** My goal is to lose 15 pounds. I currently weigh 169lbs., and would like to be 154lbs by May 15th. I will weigh myself weekly and announce it to class, and post it to facebook. If I weigh more than 154lbs on May 15th my surrogate will mail my check for $100 to the Westboro Baptist Church, a group I and many Americans loathe. See this link: <http://bigthink.com/think-tank/how-the-westboro-baptist-church-can-help-you-lose-weight>. This is an application of a well-known outcome in behavioral economics referred to as the “endowment effect”. We work harder to prevent loses than achieve gains. The $100 in my pocket means more to me than the $100 I would receive. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endowment_effect>

Some background readings and helpful links follow below:

Consider getting quantitative with your goals and goal tracking. There is an internet movement dedicated to quantifying things about yourself, with much of the data related to health. Check out the blog: <http://quantifiedself.com/>. Also there is an excellent template for utilizing a google docs form to track your health behavior: <http://lifehacker.com/5901651/fill-out-this-one+minute-form-every-day-and-find-out-why-your-life-sucks-or-doesnt>

There are a host of apps to help stay motivated as well:

An extensive list from QS <http://quantifiedself.com/guide/>

Fitsby: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.fitsby>

Gym-Pact: <http://www.gym-pact.com/>

Fig: <http://lifehacker.com/5972758/fig-tracks-everything-you-do-to-give-you-an-all+around-view-of-your-health>

From some behavioral economists comes this website: <http://www.stickk.com/>

Below is a list of articles from marginalrevolution – a blog by a few economists - that discusses the economic perspective on losing weight and developing appropriate incentives.

<http://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2010/09/should-you-bet-on-your-own-ability-to-lose-weight.html>

<http://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2010/11/anthony-trujillos-diabetes-nudge-bleg.html>

<http://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2010/09/should-you-bet-on-your-own-ability-to-lose-weight.html>

<http://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2010/08/weight-loss-and-incentives.html>

<http://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2008/02/tyler-and-i-hav.html>