

Setting SMART Goals

Goal setting is a powerful process for thinking about your ideal future, and for motivating yourself to turn this vision of the future into reality.

The process of setting goals helps you choose where you want to go in life. By knowing precisely what you want to achieve, you know where you have to concentrate your efforts. You'll also quickly spot the distractions that would otherwise lure you from your course.

More than this, properly-set goals can be incredibly motivating, and as you get into the habit of setting and achieving goals, you'll find that your self-confidence builds fast.

Healthy Goals

I use goal setting in my practice in a couple of different ways. Firstly I encourage everyone to set “health goals.” These goals may be to lose weight, to maintain blood pressure without medications, or even to have a baby. These goals help me as a practitioner to put together a program to help you reach the goals that YOU have. The goals also help you to keep motivated and stay on track.

Setting goals in other aspects of your life can also help you with your health goals. Setting and achieving goals can help to increase self confidence, hope and create excitement about the future. Working towards financial, family and career goals can help to significantly reduce your stress levels – simply by having a plan!

Goal Setting Tips: SMART Goals

The following broad guidelines will help you to set effective goals:

- S** *Smart:* You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible. There is nothing more dispiriting than failing to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control. If you base your goals on personal performance, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals and draw satisfaction from them.
- M** *Measurable:* Set a precise goal, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement.
- A** *Attainable:* Keep the low-level goals you are working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward.

- R *Relevant* It is important to set goals that YOU can and want to achieve. Many people (employers, parents, media, society) can set unrealistic goals for you. They will often do this in ignorance of your own desires and ambitions. Alternatively you may set goals that are too high, because you may not appreciate either the obstacles in the way or understand quite how much skill you need to develop to achieve a particular level of performance.
- T *Time-bound:* Derive today's goals from larger ones and don't forget to set a date/time for each one.

Also make sure that you write your goals down!

What Happens when I Achieve my Goal?

When you have achieved a goal, take the time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so. If the goal was a significant one, reward yourself! But take care that your reward isn't counter productive (i.e. don't celebrate 1 week without smoking with a cigarette reward!).

With the experience of having achieved this goal, review the rest of your goal plans:

- If you achieved the goal too easily, make your next goals harder.
- If the goal took a dispiriting length of time to achieve, make the next goals a little easier.

Remember too that your goals will change as time goes on. Adjust them regularly to reflect growth in your knowledge and experience, and if goals do not hold any attraction any longer, then let them go.