Goal Setting

No matter how big or small, setting goals for yourself can help you feel a greater sense of purpose in your life, and can help provide structure for everyday decision-making. Goals can also help you reflect on your values and the aspects of life that give you the greatest sense of accomplishment. However, goal setting can feel overwhelming. Many of us have ideas about what we would like to change but figuring out a plan to ensure our vision comes to fruition is where the real work begins. Goal setting requires practice, like any other skill. Luckily, there are many strategies that provide a framework for successful goal setting.

SMART Goals

SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

SPECIFIC	MEASUREABLE	ATTAINABLE	RELEVANT	TIME-BOUND

✓ <u>Be Specific</u>. What exactly would you like to achieve? When we set vague goals such as, "I want to be healthy and fit," it makes it difficult to know when this goal is met. A more specific goal would be, "I want to eat vegetables at least 5 times a week and run a mile in under 10 minutes." This is specific and it will be simple to determine if the goal is met.

✓ <u>Is Your Goal Measurable</u>? If your goal is measurable, it will be clear when you have accomplished it. If your goal is large and/or long-term, consider developing small, measurable steps along the way to your final goal to boost your sense of achievement.

✓ <u>Set Attainable Goals</u>. When you set goals, be mindful of the effort it will take to achieve it. Goals that are too simple and easy provide little to no sense of motivation or achievement and goals that are too hard can be discouraging or seem impossible.

✓ <u>Why Is This Goal Relevant To You</u>? It is important to ask yourself this question when setting goals. If the goal is something that you care about and aligns with your values, you will be more motivated to put in the effort to accomplish it.

✓ <u>Create A Time-Frame</u>. Setting a clear deadline to achieve your goal can help strengthen your motivation to accomplish it.

Goal Setting

Staying on Track

- ✓ <u>Reward yourself</u>. Sometimes we need a little extra motivation to accomplish a task. Decide ahead of time how you will treat yourself for accomplishing your goal. Even small rewards help reinforce behaviors.

- ✓ <u>Share your goals with someone.</u> Sharing your goals with a friend, family member, colleague, or mental health professional can introduce accountability. This person can help you create the steps to accomplish your goal and encourage you along the way.

- ✓ <u>Create a visual representation of your goals.</u> Creating a collage or hanging a picture that represents your goal can be a good source of motivation. Consider placing this picture somewhere you will see it daily so that you are focused on your goal and set your intentions for the day.

- ✓ <u>Connect your goal to an existing habit.</u> If you incorporate your goal into your existing habits, you are more likely to engage in the behaviors needed to accomplish your goal. For example, if your goal is to drink more water, connect it to something you already do every day. Challenging yourself to drink a glass of water while you're waiting for your morning coffee to brew makes use of spare time and can work the new behavior into your new routine seamlessly.

Set Goals That Matter to You

Especially around the start of the year, there can be a lot of pressure to set goals that are centered around societal norms or expectations. The goals you set should enrich your life, reflect what matters most to you, and shouldn't add stress. For example, setting goals to incorporate more leisure, social, or family time are important and can have positive effects on your mental well-being.

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