

Jacqueline Crighton's tips for
GOAL SETTING

"The best way to reach the top is by taking one step at a time!"

How many times in our lives have we decided to change some of our so-called "bad habits" promising ourselves we'll lose weight, increase our exercise, stop smoking, save more money etc, etc. If you are like many people the good intentions last for a day or two, maybe even a week - but rarely for a lifetime. Why are these promises not achieved?

There are many reasons why people do not achieve what they set out to do. The number one reason is lack of commitment. As the old saying goes, "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink".

WHY Set Goals?

Goal setting is a simple effective way of achieving what you set out to do. It can help:

- Focus attention and effort.
- Foster the development of new strategies.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Create and maintain motivation.

WHEN Should You Set Goals?

Goals can be set anytime during your life when you need some direction and motivation to achieve something. They can be long or short-term goals.

WHAT Kind of Goals Should You Set?

For goals to be achievable they must be:

1. Realistic but Challenging
2. Specific and Measurable
3. Positive not Negative
4. Forgiving not rigid

"Exercising more" is a commendable ideal, but it's not specific. "Walking 5 miles everyday" is specific and measurable, but is it realistic for a beginner? "Walking 30 minutes everyday is more realistic but doesn't allow any flexibility. "Walking 30 minutes at least 3 times per week" is realistic, specific, measurable, positive and forgiving.

STEP 1

Choose an area in your life that you wish to change. *e.g. body weight*

STEP 2

List at least two personal strengths and two personal weaknesses that relate to this area. *e.g S: I like exercise and enjoy eating fruits and vegetables. W: I love chocolate and find it difficult to stick to a diet plan.*

Listing your strengths and weaknesses helps when planing the strategies to achieve your goal, as you can call on the strengths and design strategies to overcome the weaknesses.

STEP 3

Write down your goal: *e.g. I wish to lose 10 pounds*

STEP 4

The next important step is give your goal a time frame. Set yourself a target date.

e.g. I wish to lose 10 lbs in 3 months, by May 1st.

STEP 5

Create a staircase of short term goals with achievement dates and some rewards:

<i>Weight Loss</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Reward</i>
<i>2 lbs</i>	<i>Feb 15</i>	<i>A movie</i>
<i>4 lbs</i>	<i>Mar 8</i>	<i>A facial</i>
<i>6 lbs</i>	<i>Mar29</i>	<i>Picnic in the park</i>
<i>8 lbs</i>	<i>April 12</i>	<i>Trip to the beach</i>
<i>10 lbs</i>	<i>May 1</i>	<i>New shoes</i>

The rewards are created for positive reinforcement to help maintain motivation. They can be anything as long as it does not hinder your goal.

STEP 6

Pick your first short term goal and outline some specific strategies to achieve this goal.

*e.g. Lose 2 lbs by Feb 15th. Strategies:
I will walk for 30 minutes three times this week.
I will remove all the fat from the meat I eat.
I will decrease soft drinks from 2 to 1 per day.*

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COMMON HICCUPS

- Goals are not specific.
- Goals are unrealistic.
- Try to change too many things at once.
- Strategies for achieving goals are not planned.
- Goals are not monitored regularly.

TIMELY TIPS

1. Evaluate and revise your goals regularly.
 - Review goals frequently e.g. diary notes.
 - Ask yourself "What did I do to help achieve my goal today".
 - Check your target dates regularly.
2. Make sure your goal is realistic.
3. Ensure that the timeframe is a safe one.
 - For example if the health professionals recommend that you lose ½ to 2 lbs a week, setting a goal to lose 10 lbs in two weeks would be unhealthy and unsafe.
4. Write your goals down with dates and strategies.
5. Write a contract with yourself.
6. Gain social support.

Now that you know the process for planning your goal strategies take the following test to see how serious you really are. (1 = Not at all ... to 7 = Very...)

1. Compared to previous attempts, how motivated are you to achieve your goal?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. How realistic is the goal you have set?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. Considering all other factors in your life right now, such as, the time commitments of our work, family commitments, your health, upcoming holidays etc, how certain are you that you will be able to stick to your goal achievement plan?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. How confident are you that you will be able to over come setbacks if they arise?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Scores: **4 - 10:** You are not very serious about your goal, give it a go when you become more committed.
 11 - 16: You are reasonably committed, but may require some extra motivational strategies.
 16 +: What are you waiting for lets get started.

One last word...

**"It makes no difference how much you think and plan,
it will be of no consequence unless you act!!"**
