

Goal setting basics

"I want to lose 25 pounds." "I want to be making a lot more money" "I want to be a better husband and father." "I would like to learn Spanish." "I want to exercise at least three times a week."

Do any of these sound familiar? Do these goals remind you of any goals you have set for yourself? Are these good goals to have? If you answered "Yes" to any of these questions, then this article may be able to benefit you greatly.

How many times do you wake up, take a look in the mirror, and think "I hate being overweight!! I'm going to lose 50 pounds!!" Maybe you even say it out loud, or jot it down on a scrap of paper. But somehow, it just doesn't happen. Why is setting goals and achieving them seem to be so challenging for so many of us? One very common reason is not having well-set goals.

Now, each of the goals above is laudable. But to have the highest chance of being accomplished, they could use a bit of work. Following is a set of qualifications for goals, a set of criteria to determine if what you've come up with are truly well-set goals.

Is your goal...?

- Realistic?— Can this goal be realistically met?
- Attainable?— Could this goal truly be achieved?
- Concrete?— Is this goal specific and set forth in sufficient detail?
- Positive?— Is this goal stated in a positive form?
- Motivating?— Does this goal motivate you to accomplish it, or does it discourage you?
- Measurable?— Is this goal time-limited?

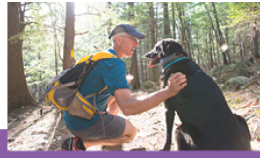
Following these simple criteria will help you set goals that are more manageable and will give them a

higher likelihood of being achieved

For example, say you want to lose some weight. Let's look at this goal compared to some sound criteria for good goal setting:

- Realistic?— Losing some weight can definitely be realistically met.
- Attainable?— Losing some weight is usually pretty easily attainable as well.
- Concrete?— RED FLAG!! This goal is not specific, or outlined with any detail. How much is "some" weight? Ten pounds? Twenty? And lost within two weeks? Six months?— Suggestion: I want to lose 20 lbs. in six months. = GREEN FLAG!
- Positive?— This goal is stated in a positive form, as opposed to stating that you do not want to gain any more weight.
- Motivating?— This one is up to you. All too often, we set goals that are so high they actually hinder us from meeting them. Take for instance, setting a goal of working out every day of the week may wind up being intimidating. Instead, making a goal to work out three days a week is much more manageable and much less overwhelming.
- Measurable?— RED FLAG!! This goal is not time-limited or measurable.— Suggestion: I want to lose 10 lbs in three months and take two inches off my waist = GREEN FLAG!

Let this example guide you as you set your goals by making sure that, at a minimum, your goal meets the above criteria. Spend some time thinking about why a particular goal is desired and what it will mean to you. Losing weight, for example, will improve your appearance, give you more energy, raise your level of self-esteem and self-confidence, lower your blood pressure, etc. Now that's motivating!!!



Another important key is to write your goals down. Then break them down into manageable steps. Take time to review your goals frequently—some experts suggest reviewing them on a daily basis! This keeps you focused on achieving them, and helps you make better decisions about how to manage your time and priorities. Taking the time to set well-thought out goals can truly make a difference and set you well on your way to achieving them and becoming more successful—at whatever you choose to do.