



EAP Educates: Personal Goal Setting

The New Year is upon us and people all around us are drawing up lists: New Year's resolutions. Often, those resolutions have been dumped by the 5th of January! However, assessing where you are and where you would like to be can be a positive and worthwhile process.

We hear all about goal setting, and many of us just pass that off as something that other people do, but the value in goal setting is that it gives you a long term goal and short term motivation to get there. It is so easy for life to become a long and pointless grind that doesn't offer much excitement or feelings of personal achievement. If you manage to set sharp, clearly defined and realistic goals, you will be able to see how you are moving forward. You will be able to raise your self-confidence because you will recognise your abilities and be able to acknowledge your ability to achieve the goals you have set.

Setting personal goals

It is sometimes difficult for people to see a big picture, but sit down for a bit and dream. You will need to set your goals on a number of levels:

- Create the big picture – what would you like to do with your life (perhaps organise and de-clutter your home)
- Break this into smaller targets that you will need to reach to get to the big picture (start with your master bedroom and perhaps move room to room)
- Once your plan is there, start working on it. (Organise your cupboards first and work out what storage facilities you will need to help you get organised)

Step 1 : Setting lifetime goals

Consider all important areas in your life. Use the following categories as guidelines or your own categories if you have other areas that are important to you:

- Family, career, financial, education, artistic, attitude, physical, pleasure, public service

Step 2: Setting smaller goals

Once you have the big picture in place consider the following:

- Look at a 5 year plan to start to get you there.
- From there create a 1 year plan, a 6 month plan and a 1 month plan to break that up into achievable bite sized portions. It is important to have bite sized manageable portions otherwise you will feel that you cannot possibly achieve your goal.
- Create a to do list
- Review the plan to make sure it is going in the direction you have chosen

Staying on course

Review your to do list daily.

Periodically review your longer term plans.



Use SMART goals

- ✓ S – Specific (or significant)
- ✓ M – Measurable (or meaningful)
- ✓ A – Attainable (or action oriented)
- ✓ R – Relevant (or rewarding)
- ✓ T – Time bound (or trackable)

Further goal setting tips

- State each goal as a positive statement
- Be precise
- Set priorities – some things are more important than others
- Write goals down – putting them down on paper makes them more real and helps you to take ownership of them.
- Keep operational goals small
 - These goals would be low-level goals. You need to be able to measure your progress in achieving them. If your goal is to clean your house before work every morning, rather set up a list of things you need to do; make the bed, straighten the bathroom, clear away dishes etc. You may not get round to doing everything before work, but you will be able to see how far you got and realise that you have achieved at least part of your goal.
- Set performance goals, not outcome goals
 - If your goal is to play a game of cricket and the weather is bad, then you can't achieve your goal through no fault of your own. If your goal is to improve your cricket game and the weather is bad, you could always practice throwing and catching indoors and improve your skills that way in spite of the weather.
- Set realistic goals
 - Setting yourself a goal that is unrealistic will set your focus on what you can't do rather than what you can do. If you are taking art classes and are learning to paint people, perhaps you could focus on learning to draw a part of a person, rather than trying to reproduce the Mona Lisa your first week.

Achieving Goals

- When you achieve a goal, take the time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so.
- Absorb the implications of the achievement – it is a big deal
- Look at how it impacts on your progress towards the bigger picture
- If it was significant, reward yourself appropriately
- Review the rest of your goal plans

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