

THE BASICS OF GOAL-SETTING

Goal setting seems simple on the surface. You define what you'd like to accomplish and take the necessary steps to make those accomplishments a reality. **Setting and achieving a goal is more than simply deciding and wishing.** Each year, millions of people set New Year's resolutions. Few of those people are still on track after just 10 days. By then end of the first quarter of the year, less than 5% of people who set those goals are still on track.

If setting and achieving goals were easy, there would be more happy, successful people running around. How many people do you know that are happy and pleased with their lives? Not very many. You can be one of the few people who know how to master setting and achieving goals.

Set goals and achieve them more reliably:

1. **Set goals that are meaningful.** Many people waste their time with goals that don't mean very much to them. Life is short, so create goals that fill you with excitement when you think about achieving them. Reaching any goal requires change, and humans are innately resistant to change. Big changes require a lot of motivation. Set goals that mean a lot to you.
2. **Create a goal-journal.** There is something about seeing something in writing, especially your own, that makes it more binding. You can daydream about what you want to do and even talk about what you want to do but nothing solidifies those goals more than a written commitment. Get a regular notebook or a goal journal and write all the details of the goals you want to achieve down, including why you want to achieve them. Even though it's your goal, it has to mentally register with you that it's important to achieve or you will abandon it. Writing things down will help you keep up with your ideas and thoughts and make you more accountable.
3. **Use small, incremental behavioral changes.** Change can be done easily if the changes are small. This requires patience.
 - Imagine someone attempting to make an overnight change from a diet of fast food, soda, potato chips, and ice cream to one of beans, vegetables, and fruit. Their mind and body would revolt and defeat will set in quickly. It would be far easier to make small changes each week until the transformation is complete.
4. **Be accountable.** Rewards are pleasant and work if the reward continues. **Behavioral changes tend to extinguish when rewards are no longer provided or fulfilling.** It can be more effective to make yourself accountable for your getting off track with somewhat of a punishment rather than a reward. For example, each time you skip going to the gym, you have to add an extra 30 minutes to your work out time
 - Negative consequences are more motivating for most people. Use this fact to your advantage. How could you punish yourself for non-compliance? Make a list of at least 10 ways.

5. **Keep goals believable.** Is it possible to increase your earnings from \$50k this year to \$1 million? It's possible, but it's not likely. And if you believe it's unlikely, you're unlikely to even try. **The perfect goal is challenging, but not so challenging that you feel overwhelmed.**

6. **Track your progress.** Measuring your progress is extremely important. It provides information on how well you're doing. You can't know if you're making progress toward your goal if you don't measure it. You can shift your strategy if you realize that you're not doing well.
 - It can also provide a boost of enthusiasm and positivity. When you're making progress, you feel excited.
 - Make a list of variables you will use to measure your progress (ie, pounds lost, money saved, raise or promotion, new business partnerships)

7. **Be prepared for setbacks.** Achieving any goal is rarely a smooth process. There will be bad days with poor results. Rather than reject your goal when the going gets tough, be prepared for failures.
 - **Have a plan in place to deal with failure and frustration.** You might call a friend or remind yourself of the purpose of achieving the goal. Reviewing your success so far can also help. Keep in mind the reason you wanted to achieve the goal.

 - **It also pays to take preventative action.** For example, if you know you're likely to cheat on your diet later in the evening, have some healthy snacks available that you enjoy. Or head to bed earlier and enjoy some extra free time in the morning.

Goals are necessary if you want to consciously change your life. Everything else is a matter of opportunity and circumstance. Most people struggle to set and achieve goals. The most successful people are people who set goals, focus on those goals, and hold themselves accountable for achieving them. Whether it is a personal goal, spiritual goal or professional goal, you should be SMART about how you set and pursue it. You'll be pleasantly surprised by the results.

Happy goal-setting!