

ACADEMIC SKILLS CENTER

STUDY SKILLS LIBRARY

Goal Setting

Discussion

Goals bring meaning to life, and without them much of life would be aimless. There is great power in setting and determining your own goals. At times we all tend to follow the crowd where there is a sort of collective mind set. Always following the crowd hinders your individual thinking to shape your own goals and the ability to decide things on your own terms and personal experiences. When you become the source of your own career and destiny, you grow without the interference of another's experience or expectation. As a result, you become more self-confident.

Types of Goals

- **Long Term:** major life targets which may take many years to achieve (such as a career).
- **Mid Term:** goals that you may attain within a few years (such as earning a degree).
- **Short Term:** may be reached in a year or less and require action now or in the near future.

"Imaging" Your Goals

Imaging is a process that has great power to make our goals sink into our unconscious mind. If we think deeply and vividly about what we want to do with our lives, imaging will fuel us with the inspiration, energy, and perseverance to work towards our goals. Read this inspirational quote:

"There is a powerful mysterious force in human nature that is capable of bringing about dramatic improvement in our lives. It is a kind of mental engineering ... In imagining, one does not merely think about a hoped-for goal; one visualizes it with tremendous intensity. Imagining is a kind of laser beam of the imagination, a shaft of mental energy in which the desired goal or outcome is pictured so vividly by the conscious mind that the unconscious mind accepts it and is activated by it. This releases powerful internal forces that can bring about astonishing changes in the life of the person who is doing the imaging."

~ Norman Vincent Peale

Changing the Meaning of GPA: Goal, Plan, Action

Define a Goal: This should include short term goals, such as passing a test and long term goals, which could be a target you aim for. Choosing your goals means deciding what you value most in life. A goal is only a wish until you write it down. Write down your goals many times and place them everywhere so you can see them many times a day to reinforce this idea in your mind. Don't worry if your goal changes; the purpose of a goal is to give you a target to work towards in order to focus your time more efficiently. If your goal changes, write down the new one.

Devise a Plan: Most goals have several possible plans. The challenge comes in choosing the best one. The best plans are not always obvious and may take some time to discover. After you've decided on a goal, work vigorously to accomplish it. However, racing the clock *efficiently* is not always the best way to

execute a plan, but *affectively* perusing it with an open mind for change, perhaps from a different angle can enhance the experience.

Take Action: Goals and plans never come to fruition unless you take action.

An Important Insight: You Cannot “Do” a Goal

You achieve or complete a goal by identifying all the sub-processes. For example: you decide your goal is to play a musical piece on the piano. How do you go about achieving this goal?

- *You need a piano*
- *You need a teacher*
- *You get a job so you can pay the teacher*
- *You need a car or you need to take the bus to get to your lessons*
- *You need to make a schedule so you can accommodate practice time every day*
- *You need to buy sheet music and other materials to practice*

These are just a few of steps that may be part of a plan to reach the goal of playing the piano.

Steps in the Process of Discovering Your Goals

Brainstorm: write down possible goals and words that come to mind without worrying about spelling, neat handwriting, or analyzing at that exact moment. This needs to be an organic and honest group of notes that will help you later in determining your possible goals. After you have finished, group similar ideas together and write a one sentence summary about its main idea.

- *Plan:* focus on one goal that you have chosen and write down a plan or series of steps you need to take in order to reach this goal.
- *List your strengths:* write down all of your academic strengths along with personal qualities.
- *Assess your weaknesses:* write down all of your academic weaknesses and personal obstacles that you will need to overcome; this could include family, and financial or health problems.

If you still are not positive of your goals after you have done all of this, don't worry. This exercise has provided you with some insights and concrete material from which to start. Talking to an academic advisor is also a great way to get advice, feedback and guidance that can aid you when mapping your goals and plans.

Setting Mini-Goals

Setting mini-goals can be very beneficial, not only in establishing confidence and a sense of self achievement, but also in getting things done effectively. Instead of being overwhelmed with the idea that your research paper is due in four days, break it up so you can pace your work and get the project done in the allotted time.

As you develop mini goals, make sure that your time is scheduled specifically, that your task description is specific and linked to the bigger picture, and that it is realistic.

Example of Research Paper Breakdown

- *Brain storm research topics*: Monday for 1 hour
- *Do internet and library research*: Tuesday for 3 hours
- *Gather and organize all research material and notes*: Wednesday for 2 hours. Create an outline with the structure and list major points for the research paper
- *Begin writing the essay*: Thursday and Friday for 4 – 6 hours. Start introductory paragraph with main points, then body paragraphs, and finally the conclusion.
- **Strategies for Scheduling Tasks**
- Schedule fixed blocks of times
- Set realistic goals
- Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions
- Set a clear starting and stopping time
- Plan for the unexpected

Bibliography

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