

4 Tips for Setting Powerful Goals

We all have two choices: We can make a living or we can design a life. Here's how to do the latter.

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The most important benefit of setting goals isn't achieving your goal; it's what you do and the person you become in order to achieve your goal that's the real benefit.

Goal setting is powerful because it provides focus. It shapes our dreams. It gives us the ability to hone in on the exact actions we need to perform to achieve everything we desire in life. Goals are great because they cause us to stretch and grow in ways that we never have before. In order to reach our goals, we must become better.

Life is designed in such a way that we look long-term and live short-term. We dream for the future and live in the present. Unfortunately, the present can produce many difficult obstacles. But setting goals provides long-term vision in our lives. We all need powerful, long-range goals to help us get past those short-term obstacles. Fortunately, the more powerful our goals are, the more we'll be able to act on and guarantee that they will actually come to pass.

What are the key aspects to learn and remember when studying and writing our goals? Here's a closer look at goal setting and how you can make it forceful and practical:

1. Evaluate and reflect.

The only way we can reasonably decide what we want in the future and how we'll get there is to know where we are *right now* and what our current level of satisfaction is. So first, take some time to think through and write down your current situation; then ask this question on each key point: *Is that OK?*

The purpose of evaluation is twofold. First, it gives you an objective way to look at your accomplishments and your pursuit of the vision you have for life. Secondly, it shows you where you are so you can determine where you need to go. Evaluation gives you a baseline to work from.

Take a couple of hours this week to evaluate and reflect. See where you are and write it down so that as the months progress and you continue a regular time of evaluation and reflection, you will see just how much ground you're gaining—and that will be exciting!

2. Define your dreams and goals.

One of the amazing things we have been given as humans is the unquenchable desire to have dreams of a better life and the ability to establish and set goals to live out those dreams. We can look deep within our hearts and dream of a better situation for ourselves and our families. We can dream of better financial, emotional, spiritual or physical lives. We have also been given the ability to not only dream, but pursue those dreams—and not just pursue them, but the cognitive ability to lay out a plan and strategies to achieve those dreams. Powerful!

What are your dreams and goals? This isn't what you already have or what you have done, but what you *want*. Have you ever really sat down and thought through your life values and decided what you really want? Have you ever taken the time to truly reflect, to listen quietly to your heart, to see what dreams live within you? Your dreams are there. Everyone has them. They may live right on the surface, or they may be buried deep from years of others telling you they were foolish, but they are there.

Take time to be quiet. This is something that we don't do enough of in this busy world of ours. We rush, rush, rush, and we're constantly listening to noise all around us. The human heart was meant for times of quiet—to peer deep within. It is when we do this that our hearts are set free to soar and take flight on the wings of our own dreams. Schedule some quiet “dream time” this week. No other people. No cellphone. No computer. Just you, a pad, a pen and your thoughts.

Think about what really thrills you. When you are quiet, think about those things that really get your blood moving. What would you love to do, either for fun or for a living? What would you love to accomplish? What would you try if you were guaranteed to succeed? What big thoughts move your heart into a state of excitement and joy? When you answer these questions you will feel great and you will be in the “dream zone.” It is only when we get to this point that we experience what our dreams are.

Write down all of your dreams as you have them. Don't think of any as too outlandish or foolish—remember—you're dreaming! Let the thoughts fly and take careful record.

Now, prioritize those dreams. Which are most important? Which are most feasible? Which would you love to do the most? Put them in the order in which you will actually try to attain them. Remember, we are always moving toward action—not just dreaming.

3. Make your goals S.M.A.R.T.

The acronym S.M.A.R.T. means Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-sensitive.

- **Specific:**
Goals are no place to waffle. They are no place to be vague. Ambiguous goals produce ambiguous results. Incomplete goals produce incomplete futures.
- **Measurable**
Always set goals that are measurable. I would say “specifically measurable” to take into account our principle of being specific.
- **Attainable**
One of the detrimental things that many people do—with good intentions—is setting goals that are so high that they are unattainable.
- **Realistic:**
The root word of realistic is “real.” A goal has to be something that we can reasonably make “real” or a “reality” in our lives. There are some goals that are simply not realistic. You have to be able to say, even if it is a tremendously stretching goal, that yes, indeed, it is entirely realistic—that you could make it. You may even have to say that it will take x, y and z to do it, but if those happen, then it can be done. This is in no way to say it shouldn't be a big goal, but it must be realistic.

- **Time:**

Every goal should have a timeframe attached to it. One of the powerful aspects of a great goal is that it has an end—a time in which you are shooting to accomplish it. As time goes by, you work on it because you don't want to get behind, and you work diligently because you want to meet the deadline. You may even have to break down a big goal into different parts of measurement and timeframes—that is OK. Set smaller goals and work them out in their own time. A S.M.A.R.T. goal has a timeline.

4. Have accountability.

When someone knows what your goals are, they hold you accountable by asking you to “give an account” of where you are in the process of achieving that goal. Accountability puts some teeth into the process. If a goal is set and only one person knows it, does it really have any power? Many times, no. A goal isn't as powerful if you don't have one or more people who can hold you accountable to it.