

Helping you get from where you are now  
to where you want to be.

## Personal Goal Setting

**Find Direction. Live your Life your Way.**

Goal setting is a powerful process for personal planning.

The process of setting goals helps you choose where you want to go in life. By knowing precisely what you want to achieve, you know where you have to concentrate your efforts. You'll also quickly spot the distractions that would otherwise lure you from your course.

More than this, properly-set goals can be incredibly motivating, and as you get into the habit of setting and achieving goals, you'll find that your self-confidence builds fast.

### Achieving More with Focus

Goal setting techniques are used by top-level athletes, successful business-people and achievers in all fields. They give you long-term vision and short-term motivation. They focus your acquisition of knowledge and help you to organize your time and your resources so that you can make the very most of your life.

By setting sharp, clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals. You can see forward progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind. By setting goals, you will also raise your self-confidence, as you recognize your ability and competence in achieving the goals that you have set.

Goals are set on a number of different levels. First, you decide what you want to do with your life and what large-scale goals you want to achieve. Second, you break these down into the smaller and smaller targets that you must hit so that you reach your lifetime goals. Finally, once you have your plan, you start working to achieve it.

### Starting to Set Personal Goals

This section explains a simple technique for setting personal goals. It starts with your lifetime goals, and then works through a series of lower level plans culminating in a daily to-do list. By setting up this structure of plans you can break even the biggest life goal down into a number of small tasks that you need to do each day to reach the lifetime goals.

### Your Lifetime Goals

The first step in setting personal goals is to consider what you want to achieve in your lifetime, as setting lifetime goals gives you the overall perspective that shapes all other aspects of your decision making.

To give a broad, balanced coverage of all important areas in your life, try to set goals in some these categories (or in categories of your own, where these are important to you):

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- *Artistic:*  
Do you want to achieve any artistic goals? If so, what?
- *Attitude:*  
Is any part of your mindset holding you back? Is there any part of the way that you behave that upsets you? If so, set a goal to improve your behaviour or find a solution to the problem.
- *Career:*  
What level do you want to reach in your career?
- *Education:*  
Is there any knowledge you want to acquire in particular? What information and skills will you need to achieve other goals?
- *Family:*  
Do you want to be a parent? If so, how are you going to be a good parent? How do you want to be seen by a partner or by members of your extended family?
- *Financial:*  
How much do you want to earn by what stage?
- *Physical:*  
Are there any athletic goals you want to achieve, or do you want good health deep into old age? What steps are you going to take to achieve this?
- *Pleasure:*  
How do you want to enjoy yourself? (You should ensure that some of your life is for you!)
- *Public Service:*  
Do you want to make the world a better place by your existence? If so, how?

Once you have decided your goals in these categories, assign a priority to them from 1 to 6. Then review the goals and re-prioritise until you are satisfied that they reflect the shape of the life that you want to lead. And ensure that the goals you set are the goals that you actually want to achieve, not ones that your parents, spouse, family, or employers think you should.

### Starting to Achieve Your Lifetime Goals

Once you have set your lifetime goals, set a 25 year plan of smaller goals that you should complete if you are to reach your lifetime plan. Then set a 5 year plan, 1 year plan, 6 month plan, and 1 month plan of progressively smaller goals that you should reach to achieve your lifetime goals. Each of these should be based on the previous plan.

Then create a daily to-do list of things that you should do today to work towards your lifetime goals. At an early stage these goals may be to read books and gather information on the achievement of your goals. This will help you to improve the quality and realism of your goal setting.

Finally review your plans, and make sure that they fit the way in which you want to live your life.

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### Staying on Course

Once you have decided your first set of plans, keep the process going by reviewing and updating your to-do list on a daily basis. Periodically review the longer term plans, and modify them to reflect your changing priorities and experience.

### Setting Goals Effectively

The following broad guidelines will help you to set effective goals:

- *State each goal as a positive statement:*  
Express your goals positively - 'Execute this technique well' is a much better goal than 'Don't make this stupid mistake'
- *Be precise:*  
Set a precise goal, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement. If you do this, you will know exactly when you have achieved the goal, and can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it.
- *Set priorities:*  
When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.
- *Write goals down:*  
This crystallizes them and gives them more force.
- *Keep operational goals small:*  
Keep the low-level goals you are working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. Derive today's goals from larger ones.
- *Set performance goals, not outcome goals:*  
You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible. There is nothing more dispiriting than failing to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control. These could be bad business environments, poor judging, bad weather, injury, or just plain bad luck. If you base your goals on personal performance, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals and draw satisfaction from them.
- *Set realistic goals:*  
It is important to set goals that you can achieve. All sorts of people (parents, media, society) can set unrealistic goals for you. They will often do this in ignorance of your own desires and ambitions. Alternatively you may be naïve in setting very high goals. You might not appreciate either the obstacles in the way, or understand quite how much skill you need to develop to achieve a particular level of performance.
- *Do not set goals too low:*  
Just as it is important not to set goals unrealistically high, do not set them too low. People tend to do this where they are afraid of failure or where they are lazy! You should set goals so that they

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are slightly out of your immediate grasp, but not so far that there is no hope of achieving them. No one will put serious effort into achieving a goal that they believe is unrealistic. However, remember that your belief that a goal is unrealistic may be incorrect. If this could be the case, you can to change this belief by using imagery effectively.

### **Achieving Goals**

When you have achieved a goal, take the time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so. Absorb the implications of the goal achievement, and observe the progress you have made towards other goals. If the goal was a significant one, reward yourself appropriately.

With the experience of having achieved this goal, review the rest of your goal plans:

- If you achieved the goal too easily, make your next goals harder
- If the goal took a dispiriting length of time to achieve, make the next goals a little easier
- If you learned something that would lead you to change other goals, do so
- If while achieving the goal you noticed a deficit in your skills, decide whether to set goals to fix this.

It doesn't matter if you don't fully achieve your goals as long as you learn from it. Feed lessons learned back into your goal-setting program.

Remember too that your goals will change as you mature. Adjust them regularly to reflect this growth in your personality. If goals no longer hold any attraction for you then let them go. Goal setting is your servant, not your master. It should bring you real pleasure, satisfaction and a sense of achievement.

### **Remember:**

Goal setting is an important method of:

- Deciding what is important for you to achieve in your life
- Separating what is important from what is irrelevant
- Motivating yourself to achievement
- Building your self-confidence based on measured achievement of goals

Each time you achieve a goal allow yourself to enjoy your achievement and reward yourself appropriately. Draw lessons where appropriate, and feed these back into your future goal setting and achieving efforts.