

Brain-Compatible Goal Setting - How and Why Goals Drive Motivation

It is important to write down your goals, since that action imprints them on your brain. Before writing your goals, identify what price you are willing to pay to achieve them. These may be material, emotional, or spiritual. At some point, expose your barriers and excuses; write them on a separate piece of paper. This list is not meant to be dwelled on; it is meant merely as acknowledgement - celebrate as you conquer each barrier or excuse.

If you are finding it difficult to decide on what you want, you could consider what author Michael Losier advised in his book, *The Law of Attraction*. He teaches a process of listing what you don't want as a prelude to making your definitive list of what you do want. Mark Victor Hansen co-author of *Chicken Soup for The Soul* said, "Once focused on the positive, you act as a magnet, to attract those things you hold in your mind."

You may have heard of S.M.A.R.T. goals. The acronym stands for specific, measurable, attainable/agreed on, relevant, and timely. My colleagues and I created an alternative formula. Here it is.

? Your goal statement must always be succinctly worded in the present tense and in the positive. Use action and emotional words. Avoid negative words, future tenses, and comparisons (better, some). Let me explain why your goal statement must be positive and in the present tense. The powerhouse of enriched learning is the subconscious mind. It is highly literal, has no concept of time, and processes in images. If you use future tenses, such as "I will...", then the subconscious mind will not act on it since it only operates in the NOW. Since there is no picture for a negative word (not, never, won't), then it just ignores it. If you state, "I am not attracted to chocolate cake," the subconscious only processes, "chocolate cake." A better wording would be, "I love foods that contribute to my body's health and vitality."

? It must be realistic and a slight stretch. Push yourself just a bit.

? It must be specific, yet your assessment of your success must be flexible. By specific, I mean avoid comparative words. If you state, "I will be more disciplined in my work assignments," that is far too vague. To the subconscious, the word more may be anywhere from .0000001 percent to 100 percent more. So be specific. Celebrate each of your accomplishments, even if it is not 100 percent of what you planned. In the book, *The One-Minute Manager*, the authors counsel that if you're off course, just do a course correction - don't jump ship! Use any slip-ups as opportunities to learn.

? Your goal must be measurable. If you can't gauge how well you're doing, how will you know that success is actually occurring? Ensure that you pick a target date. It must also be paced so that you can recognize your achievements at specific points along the way. This is the step where you take your overall goal and break it down into bite-sized modules. This chunking-down can be by subject, time, place, or resource.

? Once your mini-goals are established, create action plans for as many as you want. This is so important. Without an action plan, all you have is a wish-list.

? Announce or share your goal with people who will be supportive. This emotional investment puts your reputation on the line.

? The last element is In Your Face. Write out your goals, cut out magazine pictures, or draw them yourself. Paste and post the images all over your world, including your bathroom mirror. Keep it in your face and top-of-mind.

Most people don't set long-term goals, let alone write them down. Some fear failure and criticism if they are less than 100 percent successful. Others don't know how to set goals. The vast majority do not appreciate the value of setting goals. The benefits of written goals are simple. They provide direction, momentum, and motivation.

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