

Setting Goals: Plan to Make Your Dreams Come True

We all have dreams, and sometimes they end in disappointment. While not every dream is within reach, many of the things you hope for in life can be achieved with careful planning, self-knowledge, and a lot of hard work.

It may seem that success comes more easily to some people than others. People who achieve their goals often possess common characteristics, such as:

- **Optimism.** Successful people focus on positive outcomes and maintain a “can do” attitude.
- **Drive.** Those who succeed take action rather than waiting for opportunity to knock on the door.
- **Persistence.** Successful people are determined to do what it takes to achieve their goals.
- **Ability to overcome fear.** Often what we want is also what we fear. Those who succeed move past or embrace the things that frighten them.
- **Creation of a support network.** Success requires the assistance of a network of family, friends, and co-workers or professional contacts.
- **Vision.** People who succeed are willing to look at the big picture. When something isn’t working, they take a step back, analyze the situation, and make necessary changes.

Know What You Want

Creating success starts by defining what



you want out of life. Use the following process to determine what you want to accomplish.

- Think about what you want out of life and what you would like to do — the ambitions and values that you deem important.
- Make a list of goals for your future. If you have difficulty listing these dreams, it may help to write them out in story format. Where would you like to be in five, ten, or twenty years?
- Outline your current skills and abilities. Then, compare your dreams to this list. To make your dreams happen, they must be realistic in light of your skills and strengths.

Creating Achievable Goals

It’s easy to get off track with an ill-defined goal, which can lead to frustration and procrastination. Your goals will be easier to attain if they are:

- Concrete and specific, not general or vague.
- Realistic — a goal should stretch you, yet still be within your reach.
- Measurable — each goal should have

a specific deadline. If you can't set a timeframe for accomplishing the goal, then break it down into smaller steps.

Creating an Action Plan

An action plan is like a road map guiding you through all the different steps you have to take to reach your goal. Your action plan can be as low-tech as a list on your refrigerator or as high-tech as an organizer application on your iPhone. Whichever method you use, make sure you set aside time to work toward each needed step. Make an appointment with yourself, and don't cancel it unless there's an emergency.

Be Open to Change

Circumstances change, and it's possible your goals will change with them. Periodically evaluate how much progress you've made in achieving each goal. If you are not progressing, ask yourself if the goal is still important to you. If you feel it no longer meets your hopes for your life, consider focusing your attention on a different goal instead.

Anticipate Obstacles

Having specific goals and a realistic action plan doesn't mean that you won't run into obstacles that could block your success. Your obstacles may be physical, situational, financial, or psychological. Identifying the reason why you're not making progress may help you to figure out alternative options for achieving your goal.

Some additional ways to overcome obstacles include:

- Get needed education and training.
- Network with contacts to gain information and get fresh ideas.
- Research helpful resources.

When working to achieve goals, it's important to enlist the help of supportive friends and family members. Surround yourself with people who share your enthusiasm for achieving your goal, even if they don't quite understand it.

In addition, be certain to take time to acknowledge your progress. Celebrating each step you take along the way will help you enjoy the journey that is achieving your dreams.

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