

SETTING YOUR GOALS

The new school year is the perfect time to develop new goals and make plans for meeting them. Many students flounder because they don't have a clear idea of where they want to go and the steps needed to get there. By sitting down with kids and helping them focus on their priorities, you can help them target their efforts and be more successful.

Goals can be of a personal or academic nature. It's best to start out with only a handful of goals; otherwise, the student can easily become overwhelmed and discouraged. Goals should also be, as much as possible, student driven. Having a goal thrust upon you without your input does nothing for motivating you.

If you come up with a blank, try this. Ask yourself these questions: how would the end of the school year look? What would you like to be at the end of the school year? What do you see that is different from how things are now? Start making a list of ideas: more involved in activities, more close friendships, making the honor roll, etc. These ideas can serve as a springboard to a discussion about what you really want to accomplish.

Once you've narrowed it down to one or two ideas, use this goal-setting process to outline what needs to be done:

Identify long-term goal. This is what will have happened or changed by the end of the year. Usually, this is a "bigger picture" type item that will be accomplished by setting and meeting a number of related short-term goals. The examples given above would all qualify. If it's something that can be done quickly and easily, it isn't a long term goal. So, you will need to Identify and write down two long term goals to work with.

Identify short-term goals. For each, long-term goal list several short term goals that will assist her in meeting those long term goal. For example, if the goal is to "Make honor roll," some short-term goals could be "Study every night," "Take better notes," "Stay organized," and "Improve study skills." Write each of these down with plenty of room to make notes and plans.

Steps to Success. For each short term goal, identify small tasks that can be utilized to help get there. For example, for the short-term goal "Take better notes," steps might include "Pay attention in class," "Write more neatly," "Review notes regularly for gaps," and "Ask teacher for note-taking tips." These are all very specific things a student can do on a daily basis. The benefit of breaking the goal down to steps is that the tasks are now more clearly defined and are in manageable chunks. For many kids, "Make honor roll," is way too overwhelming. They don't even know where to begin.

Reassess plan. Periodically, review the progress that is being made towards each goal. Revise your plan if necessary. Be sure to celebrate the small achievements that will ultimately result in meeting the goal. Often, kids need the frequent feedback and success that will continue to motivate them towards completion. So, look for those opportunities to pat yourself on the back, acknowledge when teachers, friends and others pat you on the back as you move towards achieving your goals.

Adapted from: http://youthdevelopment.suite101.com/article.cfm/goal_setting_for_teen

HOW TO SET GOALS SUMMARY

1. Define the goal.*
2. Outline the steps needed to achieve it.
3. Consider possible blocks and ways of dealing with them.
4. Set deadlines.

*Not every wish can be a goal. For instance, you may wish you could live and stay young forever, but since there's nothing you can do to make that happen, it could never be considered a goal.

In order for something to be a goal:

- It has to be important to you, personally.
- It has to be within your power to make it happen through your own actions.
- It has to be something you have a reasonable chance of achieving.
- It must be clearly defined and have a specific plan of action.

QUESTIONS/TIPS

1. If you could become anything you wanted, or accomplish anything you wanted in life, what would it be? What can you do to make that happen? Are you doing it? (If not, why not?)
2. Think of three things you'd like to accomplish in the next several months. These must be things that are truly important to you and within your power to accomplish. For each one, describe in detail what you will need to do in order to succeed and lay out a plan for doing it (including deadlines). Now that you have set three goals, try carrying out your plans.
3. Write about a time when you succeeded at something because you made it a goal and committed to it. - Describe what happened. - How did that make you feel? - What did you learn from that experience?
4. Sometimes, despite our best plans and efforts, we fail anyway. Think about a time when you tried to accomplish something but came up short. - What happened? Why did it happen? - How did you deal with it? - What did you learn from it? - Did anything positive come out of it?
5. Imagine that someday you will have children. What bits of advice would you give them? What would you tell them to be aware of when they reach the age you are right now? What would you tell them about the goals you had at this age, and what those goals did for you? What would you tell them about taking risks - what kinds of risks are good to take and what kinds aren't? And, what would you tell them about how to deal with failure and disappointment so they won't be discouraged when things don't work out the way they want?

Adapted from: <http://www.goodcharacter.com/BCBC/Goals.html>