

Goal-setting Guide

The following advice is from the IMP team, who hope your mentoring partnership will be fulfilling and meaningful.

Purpose of goal setting

Setting goals can be an important part of keeping motivation levels high and achieving the future and life you want. Though many people struggle with goal setting, there are a range of different approaches to this process, and we encourage you to find one that speaks to you. Whichever goal-setting model you choose, the intention is to be specific about what you want to achieve as this helps you identify what steps you'll need to take to get there. According to Hellriegel, Slocu, and Woodman & Martens (1992), goals are important because they help:

- Guide and direct behavior
- Provide clarity
- Improve performance
- Reflect what the goal-setter considers important
- Instill pride and satisfaction in achievements
- Provide structure and standards
- Increase motivation
- Bolster self confidence
- Help decrease negative attitude

Deciding on your goals

The best goals take the most important aspects of your life into account, including values, career aspirations, mindset, family circumstances and social ambitions. You can have shorter- and longer-term goals. Some might be readily achievable, and some might take a bit more time. There is no right or wrong.

Write it down

While it might seem fairly trivial, the act of writing your goals down can make a huge difference. Research (Matthews, 2015) suggests that writing your goals down makes you 42% more likely to achieve them. Even better - keeping yourself accountable by sharing your goals with a friend or mentor who will check in for regular updates means that you will be over 70% more likely to achieve the goals you set for yourself.

Goal setting Models

A quick web search of "Goal setting models" will yield numerous options. Here are two to get you started:

SMART goals

A time-tested goal setting model that many will be familiar with, SMART goals can be a useful place to start when considering your goals for the future.

Specific

For some people, goals **that** are highly specific have a greater chance of being accomplished. To make a goal specific, consider the who, what, where, when and why aspects of the goal.

Measurable

A measurable goal has criteria for determining progress. To make your goal measurable, consider two questions: “How will I know when I’ve reached my goal?” and “What are my indicators of progress?”

Achievable

An achievable goal should challenge and stretch you, but not make you feel overwhelmed or defeated. Consider these questions to determine whether your goal is achievable: “Do I have access to the resources and capabilities to achieve this goal?” and “If not, what am I missing?”.

Realistic

A realistic goal is one that can be achieved given the available resources and time – and given these, is still something you want to commit to.

Time-bound

A time-bound goal has a start and finish date. Without a deadline, there may be no sense of urgency and motivation to achieve the goal.

Fuzzy or open goals

On the other end of the goal-setting spectrum, are fuzzy, or open goals. Different from SMART goals, they value progress over perfection, and an iterative approach to goal setting that enables goals to shift as the circumstances around them do. They encourage action, even at times when the way forward isn’t clear. Research has demonstrated a link between open or fuzzy goal-setting and positive psychological outcomes.

Goals guidance

Whether you are a mentor or a mentee, the IMP team is here to help. If you could use some support with goal setting, or any other aspect of your mentoring participation or partnership, please don’t hesitate to contact us!

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