



Goals: Setting Them the SMART Way

Vague, abstract goal-setting does not usually lead to success; it can amount to little more than wishful thinking. Instead, when you are working to change behavioral patterns, improve habits, and meet your goals, you are more likely to be successful if those goals are structured to address the following five SMART criteria:

S = Specific

Define your goal in specific, positive terms. Identify something that you plan to do, rather than something that you plan to stop doing.

M = Measurable

How will you measure your progress in meeting your goal? How will you know that the goal has been achieved?

A = Accountable

Who will hold you accountable to meet the goal? How and when will this happen?

R = Realistic and Relevant

Is the goal really achievable, and does it fit with your overall mission?

T = Timetable

How much time will you give yourself to complete the goal? If it is a goal that involves a repeated behavior, how often should the behavior be repeated? Daily? Weekly?

The following is an example of a vague goal. It is basically just a form of wishful thinking, unlikely to lead to real change:

"I don't want to be anxious in class. I want to improve my confidence in social settings."

Restated as a SMART goal, it might look like this:

"My goal is to overcome my social anxiety by doing the following..."

✓ *I will challenge myself to raise my hand and ask a question during classes three times over the next week.*

Specific goal with a Timetable

✓ *In my notebook, I will write down the question I ask, the answer I receive, and the emotions I feel at the time.*

Measurable

✓ *I will ask thoughtful questions on my own, without waiting for my instructor to prompt me; I will also plan to report back to my therapist and/or my fellow group therapy members at next week's session about the results of my experience.*

Accountable

✓ *If I can get comfortable participating in class like this, my confidence will grow, and I will feel good about contributing to the learning process. My instructor encourages questions, and she will likely appreciate my participation."*

Realistic and Relevant



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