

organize today!

Ideas and tips to help you live
an organized, simpler life at work and home

Reaching Your Goals

Goal making and keeping doesn't have to be stressful. With proper planning, goals can help you reach dreams — both big and small. Whether revolving around family, work, or personal aspirations, goal making allows you to evaluate the past and present and make impactful and meaningful decisions about the future.

In fact, research has shown that people who effectively use goal setting:

- suffer less from stress and anxiety
- concentrate better
- show more self-confidence
- perform better
- are happier and more satisfied.

And who wouldn't like to receive those great benefits? Read on to learn step-by-step goal making strategies. Ready, set, GOAL!

What are others resolving to do?

A poll of Top Ten New Year's Goals found that Americans want to spend more time with family and friends, get fit, lose weight, quit smoking, quit drinking, get out of debt, learn something new, help others, get organized and appreciate life more. Also high on the list is to simply slow down. Consider these facts:

- 42% of adults report that too often they feel that life is a treadmill and they can't get off.
- 78% of adults say they wish they had more time to stop and smell the roses. Women feel this more strongly than men.



Interestingly, 81% of people consider themselves organized, yet 83% say getting more organized is among their goals. If getting organized is among your goals, consider contacting your local professional organizer for assistance. With the proper advice and encouragement, you'll quickly be on the right path to a more productive, less stressful year!

Sources: Franklin Covey Co., General Nutrition Centers, and Damon Burton

Let's make a goal!

Decide on a goal

The first — and sometimes hardest — step to goal making is selecting a goal. So many people make the same resolutions each year: quit smoking, lose weight, get organized. And then they quickly abandon them. Ask yourself, “What do I really want? How can I make myself happier?” Brainstorm a bit and come up with five to ten ideas. Then select one or two to work on. The goal doesn't have to be daunting; in fact, it should be realistically attainable.

Write it down

The next step to achieving your goal is to write it down. By doing this, you are making a commitment with yourself and are more likely to follow through. Only about 5% of the population writes down life goals, which may be one of the reasons that at least 50% of people who set New Year's resolutions have abandoned them by the end of January and up to 90% call it quits by April.

As you write your goal, concentrate on the positive and make it specific and attainable. Instead of one big scary New Year's resolution, try to list a series of smaller steps that will get you there in manageable increments. For example, if your resolution is to “try new things,” your list might break down into these tasks:

- introduce myself to one new person a week
- eat at one new restaurant per month
- take continuing education class this spring
- join local book club
- listen to foreign language tapes in car

Also write down WHY you want to reach your goal. Once you reach it, how will your life improve?

Measure & evaluate

Another key to goal-keeping success is to define ways to measure your success. By using a time table, you'll force yourself to be accountable. Look at your goal in the short-term, mid-term and long-term. For example, don't say, “I will get organized this year.” Say instead, “I will organize my closet this week,” “I will evaluate my overloaded schedule next month,” and “I will ask someone to help me organize my paperwork by the end of March.”

Keep your written goals posted where you can always see them: your computer monitor, a bathroom mirror, the refrigerator door, or your daily planner. On your calendar, write down your task completion dates so you can evaluate your successes at least once a week. [If the goal you're working on involves changing a habit, remember that it usually takes 21 days to change a habit.] At the end of a goal achievement, reward yourself — treat yourself to a small gift or relaxing activity. Celebrate what you have accomplished and move onto the next goal activity. And every few months, look at the goals you have set for the year. Do you still want to focus on these goals? Give yourself permission to change your goals and resolutions based on your life changes.

Get help

If keeping yourself motivated and moving forward can be tough, or if the thought of goal-making terrifies you, consider enlisting the help of a trusted friend, family member or co-worker. Consider hiring an expert in your area of change, such as a professional organizer, personal trainer, or financial planner. Or if you need help defining your goals, get help from a life coach (find one at www.coachfederation.org.)

Food for thought

Looking at life's many areas for improvement

If you can't quite decide on a goal, try looking at these broader life categories:

- Family/Home Environment
- Career/School
- Money
- Spiritual/Ethical
- Physical/Health/Self Care
- Family/Friends
- Romance/Marriage
- Social/Cultural
- Educational/Personal Growth
- Fun

Are you happy with these areas? Which ones need the most work? Make a list of those you'd like to focus on, and then write a few specific mini-goals under each of those categories. Now ask yourself, "Which will give me the greatest rewards? Which will improve my life the most and make me really happy?"



For example, if you feel your life is lacking social and cultural experiences, treat yourself to fresh ideas by investigating a new part of town (or the world!) Read books on topics new to you. Attend foreign films. Talk to people outside your usual circle. Attend an opera or classical music concert.

By taking the time to step back and really evaluate your life, you'll make changes that will impact you in so many wonderful ways.

Goal making tips

- Make appointments with yourself to complete the steps necessary to work on your goal assignments. Pick a time each week and write it on your calendar.
- You don't have to please everyone. Carefully consider the things you say "yes" to. See if they support your goals in life. If they are not truly important, you are not obligated. Practice saying, "Let me check my calendar and get back to you."

Words To Live By

Find ecstasy in life;
the mere sense of
living is joy enough.
— Emily Dickenson

The greater the obstacle,
the more glory
in overcoming it.
— Molière

We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then, is
not an act but a habit.
— Aristotle

If you can dream it,
you can do it.
— Walt Disney

Opportunity is missed
by most people because
it is dressed in overalls
and looks like work.
— Thomas Edison

The secret of getting ahead
is getting started.
The secret of getting
started is breaking
your complex,
overwhelming tasks into
small, manageable tasks,
and then starting
on the first one.
— Mark Twain

Vision without action
is a daydream.
Action without vision
is a nightmare.
— Japanese Proverb

Ask the Organizer

Q *How can I help my children make and reach their goals?*

A Short-term goals work best for younger children. Encourage them to make goals that they can accomplish. Emphasize the importance of achieving each step toward success, not just the final goal. Reward them often for their successes. Depending upon their age, the length of a goal might be a week for grade schoolers (such as doing their homework every night for a week) or a semester for high schoolers (making the honor roll.) Check in periodically to see how the child is doing and offer advice when necessary.

Q *Are there any web-based resources I can use to help me set and reach my goals?*

A On-line, there are many websites to help you. Type “goal making” into any search engine and you’ll come up with dozens. One to visit is www.mygoals.com, which includes pre-made goal plans that include common obstacles, tasks, and due dates. The website also contains helpful tips, instructions and links to resources that can help you accomplish this goal. Note that some services, including this one, require a subscription fee. But there is a free trial and a free on-line newsletter, so take advantage of these!



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