

Setting Personal Goals

Remember Bridget Jones' New Year's resolutions?

"...reduce the circumference of each thigh by 1 1/2 inches, visit the gym three times a week not merely to buy a sandwich, form a functional relationship with a responsible adult, and not fall for any of the following: misogynists, megalomaniacs, people with girlfriends or wives, emotional fuckwits, alcoholics, workaholics, chauvinists, or perverts. And learn to program the VCR."

Who can't relate? We've all probably at one time in our life believed that we really should be doing something about our health, weight, career, finances, relationship, electronic products...

So for those of you committed to penning some personal goals...

Step One - Agonize

No pain, no gain!

What's important to me about this goal?

If you're going to put yourself out there, then make sure that its worth it, that it excites you, nourishes you, enriches you and fits with where you want your life to go. If it doesn't, then really, what is the point in making it in the first place?

Do I really believe I can achieve this goal?

If you're doubting yourself even as you craft the goal, then hold that pen. Focus instead on that annoying inner voice that tells you're a loser that sucks at keeping goals, that you're never going to keep the resolution, that this year will be no different from others. Yes, we've all got an Inner Critic that's been chatting intimately to us for years, putting us down, keeping us in the comfort zone, second guessing our every move. Would we accept that from anyone else in our lives? I don't think so. And yet we allow ourselves to sabotage our most cherished dreams. Awareness is curative. The Inner Critic will begin to lose its power over us when we learn to recognize it's voice, understand that it doesn't have our best interests at heart, and realize that we have a choice about whether to accept what it is saying.

How committed am I to achieving this goal?

This is a biggie. Our level of commitment determines our success. Best to be honest up front here, not judge yourself, and trim down the list if you're not really committed.

Remember, if you break a resolution its like giving that pesky Inner Critic a feast, so you're doing yourself a real favour here by being realistic and calling it like it really is.

Step Two - Visualize

Begin with the end in mind.

No one says it better than Steven Covey in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Vision is super, super powerful and your most effective weapon against the Inner Critic.

Close your eyes and see yourself having accomplished the goal (20lbs lighter, in a new job). Where are you? What do you look like? What do you see? Who is around you? What are you doing? What are you wearing? What are you saying? What do you hear? How do you feel? What do others say about you? How do you feel about that? Try to get in as much detail as possible. Really imagine that you are sitting in that place, being that person, revelling in it all.

Then describe in writing the experience you have imagined (or draw a sketch, or make a collage). If writing, use the present tense, as if it is happening now. Remember, it's not so much what the vision is, it's what the vision does. Without a doubt, vision is the power and purpose behind successful people everywhere.

Step Three - Strategize

The longest journey begins with a single step

The importance of planning is critical to success. Chunk it down and plan it out. What do I have to do to start? What's the plan? The first step? What's going to prevent me from achieving what I want, and how will I overcome these obstacles? What are my coping strategies? Where have I been successful in the past and what pulled me through it? Where's my support? How will I hold myself accountable?

Step Four - Mobilize

Just Do it

Get out of your head and move into action. Stick to it. Change is a discipline. Experts say it takes about 21 days for a new activity, such as exercising, to become a habit, and 6 months for it to become part of your personality. Track your progress, reward yourself for each small success and don't beat yourself up over the occasional slip. Instead, take out your visualization writing or collage, remind yourself of why you want to change and what it will give you, and recommit.

Questions to ask yourself when setting goals

☞ *Is this a time for action?*

Creating the goal

☞ *What would I like to commit to?*

☞ *What would make a really big difference? What else? One more.*

☞ *What would be a giant stake I could plant in the ground right now?*

☞ *Would I like to stretch myself on this one?*

☞ *If I were to really go for this, what would my goal have to look like?*

☞ *Is it impossible to achieve? Is it too easy?*

Supporting the goal

- ☞ What obstacles might stand in the way of achieving this goal?*
- ☞ What can I do about these?*
- ☞ What other people or resources do I need to assist me?*
- ☞ What do I need to put in place to ensure success?*
- ☞ What structures can I use to remind myself?*
- ☞ What visual reminders can I put around my house or office?*

Making the goal SMART?

- ☞ How will I know when I have done it?*
- ☞ How can I make it more measurable?*
- ☞ How can I make it more specific?*
- ☞ How achievable is my goal?*
- ☞ When am I going to do it?*
- ☞ What is the deadline for getting these results?*
- ☞ How will others know when I have done it?*
- ☞ How would I like to be held accountable?*