

Appendix 8-B: Creating a Motivating Goal, Part 2

This information is a continuation of the questions provided in Part 1. You should use the question to guide you in developing goals that are compatible with who you are and what you want.

Is your goal SMART?

Now that you have made some purposeful decisions about some general aspects of your goals, it is time to put that information to work in the nitty-gritty process of making your goals as clear as possible. Think of it this way: If you don't know exactly what completing your goal will look like, you won't know whether you actually achieved them. Using the SMART criteria can help you be as explicit as possible about what you aim to do.

S—Specific: *Have you included enough detail to know exactly what the outcome will be?*

Being specific with your goal helps keep you focused and narrows down what could otherwise be an overwhelming task. For example, a broad intention to "get healthier" could be narrowed down to focus just on getting more sleep. Once you have achieved this goal, you could focus on a different element of being healthy (e.g., exercise or healthy eating).

If you ask yourself "Why do I want this? What's the larger purpose that I am really after?" you can work to make sure you are being specific in the direction of the outcome you truly want.

M—Measurable: *How will I know when I have achieved this goal? What will have changed?*

Being able to measure the outcome ensures that you will know when you have reached your goal. A goal of "getting more sleep" is more measurable if you quantify it (i.e., express it with numbers), perhaps by specifying "get 7.5 hours of sleep each night." Vague terms like *more*, *less*, *greater*, and *fewer* can always be improved to be more measurable.

A—Attainable: *Do I have or can I acquire the necessary resources to reach this goal (e.g., attitude/motivation, skills, ability, money)? What am I prepared to do in order to reach it?*

As you reflect on the resources you need, consider what is within your control. Make sure you aren't setting a goal that is completely out of your grasp! If you have been averaging 5 hours of sleep a night and still feel like you don't have enough time to fulfill all your obligations, getting an extra 2.5 hours of sleep a night is unlikely to be attainable unless you make other sacrifices. For example, you may need to cut out an hour of social time or service to the community each week in order to get a little more sleep each night.

R—Relevant: *How does this goal move you closer to the larger vision you have for your life?*

How does this goal move you closer to the long-term goal you set for yourself and how does this goal align with what you want to contribute to the world over time? Using the sleep example, you could make the connection that having healthier sleep habits will help you be more alert and effective during your other activities.

T—Timely or time-bound: *Does your goal have a stated deadline? When do you want to have met this goal?*

Without having a specific time frame to work within, you could drag your feet and not make any real progress. Make sure that the time frame you set for yourself is reasonable given the other aspects of the goal. For example, increasing from 5 hours of sleep per night to 7.5 hours of sleep per night will require a few days of acclimation as your body gets used to the increased sleep and as you make adjustments to your schedule to accommodate the increased sleep time.

Action Item: Use your thoughts on the SMART information provided here to create more detailed goals.

Have you identified ways to protect your goal?

No matter how well thought out our goals are, we will always face challenges that threaten to derail our progress. Thinking ahead and planning for some of these challenges help you manage bumps in the road and avoid giving up your goal.

The following questions can help you think about different ways to protect your goals:

- *Who are some resources you will need to have as you pursue this goal? When do you need them?* Is there an expert you can call upon to give you advice or guidance? Is meeting personally with that expert required (e.g., going to the writing center as part of your assignment) or optional (e.g., meeting with a fitness trainer to improve your workout routine)?
- *When will you check in with yourself to see how much progress you've made toward your goal?* Try to find the sweet spot between giving yourself enough time to let your plan start working and letting so much time pass that you forget what goal you are working toward.
- *What will you do if you get discouraged and start to think you want to give up on this goal? Who are some allies you can turn to for help to keep you on track?* Choose friends or family who are available to encourage you and provide honest feedback on your journey. Let them know about your goals and ask them to help you; be as specific as possible in making your request.

Action Item: Identify resources you can tap into to help you stay on track. Make sure you have one specific goal in mind as you identify these resources; each goal is unique and what works in support of one goal might not be the best help when pursuing a different goal.