

Goal setting

The journey towards recovery from mental illness is one that is measured in ever-lengthening strides. At first every day must be met on its own terms, but with time you can plan further ahead into the future.

Sometimes it can be like learning to walk again. There are times when it's hard to stay balanced, and this is especially true if we don't have a sense of momentum and destination.

We've all been told that hope is an important element in recovery, but hope alone isn't enough. Hope is like fuel for a car - even if it has a full tank, it won't get anywhere unless it is driven to its destination.

Hope equates to potential. To really foster hope we should harness this potential and allow it to take us somewhere. This is where goal setting comes into play.

Setting goals is important in the process of recovery, but it is something that we often neglect to do. Perhaps this is because when we set a goal to do something, we create the possibility of failure.

Throughout history, successful people have shared one attitude - that there is no such thing as failure. Each time they have tried something and fell short of their goal, they have used the fresh knowledge from this experience to help them in their next attempt.

Your own goal may not be as world changing as creating the light bulb, but that doesn't matter - what's important is the fact that you set yourself a goal in the first place.

From making yourself a cup of coffee in the morning to running a marathon, just about everything you can do starts off as a goal...

You are setting and achieving goals every day without often even realising it.

A good acronym to remember when it comes to setting goals is **S.M.A.R.T.** This means that your goal should be:

- **Specific** - The more precise your goal is, the easier it will be to achieve and work towards.
- **Measurable** - If you can measure your progress towards your goal, you are more likely to stick with it.
- **Attainable** - Do you have the skills and abilities required to reach the goal, and are you happy to learn if required?
- **Realistic** - Are you both willing and able to work towards the goal you have set?
- **Timely** - When do you aim to achieve your goal? Having a set time frame creates a sense of urgency that will spur you into action.

Whether your goal is big or small, you can still employ these same concepts to help you achieve it.

One example of goal setting and completion would be the article you are reading now. It started out with the **specific** goal of "writing an article about goal setting."

Proof that it was **measurable, attainable** and **realistic** is the fact that you are reading it now. The element of **timeliness** was added by having a deadline by which to complete the article.

This target wasn't necessarily easy, but it was **S.M.A.R.T.** This is coming from someone who is more of an unconscious versus a conscious goal setter, but who plans to use these techniques more in the future.

Goals can be scary; often when we think about goals, it is the bigger ones that come to mind.



Setting goals also means that we create in our minds the idea of failure, which is something today's society has grown increasingly averse to.

By deciding not to try something because there is a chance of failure, we increase the chance of failure to 100%. Nothing in life is guaranteed; what kind of lives would we live if we only did things we knew we were sure to succeed at?

That's one lesson to be learned by the inventors and leaders in this world - we fail not when an attempt to do something doesn't work, but when we stop *trying* to do something in the first place.

One key point with goal setting is to remember that it's not only the end goal that is important, but the journey it takes to get there. Goals shouldn't be Superman-like leaps in a single bound; they should be broken into smaller, measurable steps so we can get a sense of progress, even if we don't reach our objective right away.

Now, my article is finished, and my goal achieved. Thanks for reading.

Tony Spencer

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