

Goals

What is a Goal?

A goal is a desired outcome of an action or series of actions. It is the end result of something we want to attain. When we achieve a goal, we have moved forward from where we were to where we want to be. Our situation has changed from what it was to what it is now. The change is something that we intended and purposefully worked towards.

The term **goal** is used in sports, such as in football. When a player kicks the ball into the designated area, he is said to have got a goal, as he has achieved the desired outcome of getting the ball into the right place. People strive for goals in private life and in business. Having a goal and working to achieve it means that you are more likely to get the outcome you want. When a person chooses a goal and works toward it, we say they have 'set' a goal for themselves.

Personal Goals

Personal goals could be to develop skills or to develop personally. Skills could be practical, such as learning to drive a car, or cognitive, such as learning a new language or how to do maths. **Goals** in personal development could be to identify one's natural talents, such as an ear for music or patience and interpersonal skills. Or to better manage emotions, such as anger or depression. A goal could be to quit smoking or lose weight by a certain date. A goal could be to 'be happy,' which implies different things for different people, depending on what makes them happy.

Business and Organisational Goals

Businesses and organisational goals are determined by the purposes for which the entity was set up. A car manufacturer's goal will be to make and sell cars. A health organisation's goal will be to provide health services. An educational institution's goal will be to provide relevant education. In each instance, subsidiary goals will be set towards achieving the desired primary outcomes. A strategic plan will be developed, along with statements of mission, value and ethics. The choice, employment and training of staff will be oriented towards the primary goal. Each sector or team will have its own goals, all related to the primary goal of the business or organisation.

Smart Goals

A number of theories have developed regarding goals and the best way to achieve them. It is no good having a goal unless its realisation is a viable possibility. Otherwise we become disappointed and disillusioned. A popular way of conceptualising goals is the **SMART** acronym, which is interpreted variously. **SMART** stands for *Specific, Manageable or Measurable, Achievable or Attainable, Realistic or Relevant and Time-bound or Timely*.

- ◆ **Specific:** a definite statement about what you want is better than a vague or unclear one.
- ◆ **Manageable:** it must be something you are capable of, can cope with and fit into your lifestyle.
- ◆ **Measurable:** being able to track and monitor the degree of change you have made along the way.
- ◆ **Achievable:** it must be possible and believable, not silly like living without food, water or sleep.
- ◆ **Realistic:** something that is desirable and has meaning for you so you will be motivated.
- ◆ **Time-bound:** without a time-frame you could go on endlessly and never reach your goal.

Why Set Goals?

Why should we bother setting goals? Could we not just 'go with the flow' and act in the moment? I think the answer is that a good, healthy, successful life is a matter of balance. On the one hand, having a rigid life plan that is about goals and nothing else could be extremely stressful. On the other hand, having no goals at all, nothing to strive for, no purpose in life and no vision for the future, could be very disheartening. Many of the challenges of life need planning and action ahead of time. We could not, for instance, meet our financial needs unless we planned and set goals.

We are more likely to get satisfaction out of life if we find meaning, and live according to that meaning. This means that we set goals in line with the things that matter to us – nurturing our relationships, being financially stable, learning skills and so on. When things don't work out well for us or life throws difficult or unexpected challenges, we can get disheartened about our goals. But if part of our goals is to develop resilience, then we eventually pick ourselves up again and continue on. If you would like help setting and achieving your goals, get in touch.