


GO FOR GOALS

The reason you can't reach your goal? It starts at the very beginning. Use this step-by-step guide to set goals you'll actually stick to

By **Chandré Davids**



Quick question: how are your New Year's resolutions coming on? If your answer is a shifty, awkward silence, chances are the goals you set weren't designed to set you up for success in the first place. Goal-setting can be a powerful tool, but it's also a specific science. Get it wrong and that dress you're aiming to fit into is going to stay at the back of your cupboard. But get it right and prepare to tap into a force of motivation that will help you achieve anything you set your mind to. The best part? It's not hard. Simply follow this step-by-step guide.

KNOW YOUR MOTIVATION

On the surface, this sounds pretty straightforward, but it's super important to narrow down what actually motivates you. Understanding the benefits of your goals will help you achieve them, says Raeesa Seedat, dietician and spokesperson for the Association for Dietetics in South Africa. The key to finding those benefits is asking yourself "why?". So, if you want to lose weight, ask yourself why. Is it because you want to know what it's like to walk up a flight of stairs and not be out of breath? Do you want to lower your blood pressure? Or are you just keen to see yourself with a six pack of abs? Whatever your reason, make sure it's something that has meaning to you; somehow it should better your life and there should be real value in achieving it. If you're not excited about - and even slightly scared of - your goal, there's a good chance you won't stick to it. Once you've found your "why", write it down and look at it whenever you feel like slacking off.

GET SMART

Ever heard the saying, "Work smarter, not harder"? Surprise, surprise, it's also the ultimate motto on the road map to being your own #goals. SMART is an acronym of the attributes that your winning goal should have. By ticking each one off, you'll create a clear target to work towards - and achieve. Time to smarten up...

1

Be Specific

When it comes to planning, you can't be unsure or vague. "A practical way to do this is to change desire into a clear goal," says Dr Craig Nossel, head of Vitality Wellness at The Vitality Institute. The first crucial step in setting goals is knowing exactly what you want to achieve. Saying, "I want to lose weight" is not good enough. "Your goal needs to be well defined. Instead, identify a specific amount of weight you want to lose, like, "I want to lose five kilos" or "I want to lose 10 percent body fat," he says.

PHOTOGRAPH: GALLO/GETTYIMAGES.COM

2

Measure up

"There are a number of mistakes people make when goal-setting - mainly setting goals that are vague, unmeasurable or impractical," says Nossel. It's important that your goals are able to be measured, so choose your number, whether it's a weight on the scale, a mark on a measuring tape or a distance you want to run. It could even be a move you want to master, like a pull-up. As long as you can measure your success.

3

Make it Attainable

Making sure your goals are attainable is as important as knowing exactly what you want to achieve. "If your goals are too difficult to attain, then not fully achieving them is most likely going to demotivate you," says psychologist Jogini Packery. Never run further than a parkrun? Soweto marathon probably shouldn't be your first race. You have to hit that sweet spot of doable, but challenging. The Soweto 10-kay will still be twice as far as you've ever run (challenging), but with training, it's totally possible. Remember that goals are there to challenge you to be better than you already are, so don't be afraid to aim for something high, but break that lofty long-term goal up into smaller short-term goals - like running 10 kays, then 21, then 42. Or losing 1.2 percent body fat per month until, four months later, you've almost hit your goal of losing five percent! Setting smaller, achievable

Best Body life goals

targets is a great way to keep you motivated because you see results almost constantly.

4

Keep it Real(istic)

It's one thing to dream big, but you also need to be sensible. A 2016 study by Harvard psychologist Amy Cuddy found that unrealistic and poorly planned goals are the number one reason people become demotivated. "If, for example, you haven't trained in months and suddenly go back to training at high intensity five days a week, the exhaustion and DOMS alone will be demotivating," says personal trainer Aneeka Buys. You may find you skip a day because you're tired and sore. That day becomes two and next thing you know, you're back at square one. Instead, start with HIIT two days a week and plan to build up steadily from there.

5

It's about Time

If your goal doesn't have a cut-off date, you're less likely to stick to it. A timeline keeps your eye on the prize. "You have to set a date by which you want to achieve your goal," says Buys. Not having a time frame makes your goal seem less urgent - and then it becomes something you can put off. Hold yourself accountable by making a commitment, like signing up for a race. If you feel accountable, you're less likely to become demotivated, says Buys.

And action!

By now your weight-loss goal should look something like this: **I will lose five percent of my body fat by 1 April. What you want to achieve is clear: you've set a time frame, it's measurable, totally achievable and realistic. Now it's time to map out your plan of action. How are you going to make this a reality? That's where mini targets come in - things that may be different to your main goal, but will help you achieve it. For example, you may aim to get in four 30-minute workouts per week or meal prep every evening so you avoid the office canteen. A week's worth of exercise and healthy eating? That's an achievement within itself. But it's also going to get you closer to that five percent fat loss. "It may seem trivial, but each step counts," says dietician Raeesa Seedat. By taking the mini steps, you're making progress that will ultimately lead to your end goal. In her study, Cuddy found that focusing on little bits of improvement was the secret to successful goal planning. By switching your focus to the little achievements you make daily, you'll keep yourself motivated and before you know it, you'll be your very own #goals.**