



In this issue:

*Choose Goals instead of Resolutions on 2022

*Setting up an Effective Goal System

*On-going groups



Choose Goals instead of Resolutions on 2022

We all have made new year's resolutions at some point in our lives and then realize at the end of the year that we failed in meeting them, and make new ones or the same ones again! Then we get stuck in this cycle of failure or disappointment and become cruel to ourselves for not meeting or being what we said we were going to become at the beginning of the year.

Part of the reason we fail is that we set this huge expectation without setting realistic objectives to meet it. For example, "I'm going to lose weight," "I'm going to go to eat better," "I'm going to save money..." Those are great statements and something to strive for. However, the steps we take to go about that, are usually pretty drastic from what we do in our daily routine. We want to go from day to night in hopes that it will give us the quick fix or take us to the end results we want faster. We say, "I'm going to go to the gym everyday," or "I'm going to stop eating _____" or "I'm not going to go shopping anymore" etc. We expect ourselves to just switch to the new us right away. Well, I can tell you from first hand experience, that usually doesn't work. If you have done it, props to you! But If you are in the same boat as me, I urge you to do things different this year.

Let's set some realistic goals with specific objectives that are doable even if we don't see results right away. We cannot skip the afternoon if we want to get to the night, the afternoon is where productivity happens, and habits that get us to our goal are developed. It is the little things that help us meet the goals, for example, waking up, getting ready and making it out the door to exercise, preparing lunch, making a shopping list, setting a savings plan, etc... The night is when we celebrate with rest and enjoy the fruits of our labor. In other words, it is a conscious, strategic, deliberate and purposeful process.

So, as we begin this year let's develop a plan on how we are going to manage our time to allow for positive changes and develop minimal steps we can commit to following consistently that will take us to the end of the year with better health, more financial stability, self-care and healthy relationships. In the next section I'll share some tips to help us succeed in 2022.



Narilyn Mejia-Peña, LCSW



SETTING UP AN EFFECTIVE GOAL SYSTEM

Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time measured (SMART) goals are a way to ensure that we are setting realistic, doable and accountable goals. To help us succeed in accomplishing our resolutions this year let's put it in a SMART goal format.

Once we have already established a SMART goal, it is time to implement some strategies to help develop the system of habits that will get us there. I stumbled across James Clear's, (the author of *Atomic Habits*) website <https://jamesclear.com/goal-setting> and found his information on goal setting extremely helpful. (He has a ton of free helpful articles, check him out) Here's what I learned from his article that can help us meet our goals this year:

- ⇒ **Focus on one goal at a time.**
- ⇒ **Stack our habits** by placing the new habit before or after an already established habit. Ex: "Before I shower, I will do 10 push ups."
- ⇒ **Set an upper bound or maximum to our task.** Setting a minimum and a maximum for our task helps us stay in long-term growth mode and avoid burning out on trying to accomplish our goal (helps us keep going to the gym after January!). For example, "I will lose at least 5 lbs. this month but no more than 10 lbs." Or "I will work on paperwork for 1 hr. daily but no more than 2 hrs."
- ⇒ **Align the environment with our goals** - what scientist call "choice architecture." Use the environment to encourage us to make the choice to support our healthy habit and/or deter us from a problematic habit. For example, leaving our phone out of easy reach when we go to bed, can limit from constant checking, or keeping a water bottle next to our desk will help us drink more water and less sugary drinks, etc. Some tips he added to help set up our environment for success included:
 - Simplicity**- getting rid of temptation/distractions that keep us from our habit/goal and avoiding multi-tasking to effectively accomplish a task. Ex. It's harder to eat healthy when junk food is what's visible and accessible, so eliminate it.
 - Use visual cues to measure progress and accountability**- He shares a few different methods in his article including the "Seinfeld and the paperclip method." The paperclip method involves starting with a jar of paperclips, marbles or item of your choice and then moving it to another jar every time you do your task, and as it accumulates you are able to see your progress. For example, you start with 30 marbles in a jar and every day you eat a healthy meal you put a marble in the empty jar until you have filled the empty jar with the 30 marbles, then start again.
 - Opt-out vs. Opt-in**- Opt-in our future self into a healthy habit while motivated and then instead of motivating ourselves to do it when it's time to go, justify why we should opt-out. Ex. Sign up for a yoga class when motivated, and then when it's time to go and not as motivated justify reasons why you shouldn't go instead of reasons for why you should.
- ⇒ **Measure our progress**- we have to know how we are performing to know where we are going. "The paperclip and Seinfeld method" can be used here. "Measuring backwards not forward method" can also be used by reviewing how we performed in accomplishing our tasks the previous week to help develop the plan of action for the current week.

Well, now it's time to get to work in developing our own strategy to make the positive changes we want to make in 2022. Hope this information gets you on your way to a successful year. You got this!

(Tips above were obtained from <https://jamesclear.com/goal-setting>)

GROUPS/ WORKSHOPS

Sharing is Self-Caring Therapist Group

Every other Tuesday at 7 p.m. 1/3, 1/17, 1/31/22 Cost: \$10

Vision Board-Experiential Workshop

Thursday 1/6/22 at 11:30 a.m. Cost: \$10

Come to this workshop to identify, visualize and then develop your own goals vision board for 2022 while learning how to use it as a clinical tool.

Sign up at <https://resiliencesocialwork.com/events>

If your agency is looking for an In-Service Trainer or is in need of consultation, I would love to see how we can work together.

Please have them contact me at:

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