

Use SMART Goals to Make Smart Choices

Objective: To successfully address your problems by learning how to use SMART goals.

You Should Know

Goals define your life whether they are unconscious or conscious. They shape your relationships, your education, what you want to achieve at work, and how you approach life. Setting goals can give you a picture of how you would like your life to be. Yet, in order for you to succeed at achieving your goals, they should be reasonable, relevant, and reachable. Otherwise, you may find yourself feeling even more helpless and hopeless, making it even harder for you to gather the courage to try again.

The SMART approach is specifically designed to turn your goals from lofty ideals to measurable, clear goals that are attainable and specifically address your needs, so that you have a much better chance of achieving them.

Does This Sound Like You?

Tristan often found himself thinking “Today I’m going to stop thinking about the house catching on fire because I forgot to turn off every light” or “Today I’m going to stop checking the locks on the windows and doors over and over again because I know that is not helpful.” Every time Tristan found himself giving in to his obsessions and compulsions, he became more despondent and resigned to his fate.

What to Do

Develop SMART goals to address, manage and resolve the problems you are concerned about. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound. You can set your own SMART goals by using the following prompts:

Specific: Goals should be specific so that you know exactly what you are working toward. Write down the overall goal you would like to achieve. Break your overall goal down into manageable pieces that are simple and small.

Not helpful	Helpful
I will be happier.	I will write in my gratitude journal every night.

Measurable: Goals must be identified in such a way that you can see, hear, or feel that you have been successful. Plan how you want to measure the goals you have decided to work on. Do you want to use a clock, a calendar, or a behavior log or chart? Do you want to measure your goal by hours, weeks, or days?

Not helpful	Helpful
I want to stop washing my hands until they are raw.	I will use a clock to time how long I wash my hands and will try to wash them for a shorter period each day.

Attainable: Is your goal realistic? Is it possible? It is important to narrow down your goal to something that you can realistically achieve and be successful at. Think about potential obstacles that might impede your progress and strategize ways to address whatever obstacles you identified.

Not helpful	Helpful
I want to start dating again and find someone to marry.	I want to join a dating site and meet some new people.

Relevant: Make sure that the goal is appropriate for your lifestyle and will be useful to you. Review your goals to make sure they match the issues you are trying to address.

Not helpful	Helpful
I want to go on a crash diet get to the gym five times a week so I can lost at least 30 pounds.	I want to consult a nutritionist and go a healthier diet while walking more each day.

Time-bound: Make sure that you set aside enough time to work toward your goals. Plan ahead so that you can consider when you would have enough time to take all the steps you'll need.

Not helpful	Helpful
I should be able to cure my OCD-fueled fears by the end of the week so that I can drive myself across town.	I will set aside at least three weeks to practice challenging my fears on a regular basis.

Setting SMART Goals

Practice setting SMART goals by completing this chart. Start by writing your overall goal here:

Specific List the smaller steps to your overall goal.	Measurable How do you plan to measure it?	Attainable Is this goal achievable?	Relevant Is it useful to you?	Time-bound When do you plan to complete this step by?

Tips

- If you find you have trouble reaching your goal, revise it rather than giving up.
 - Break it down even further.
 - Make sure it is concrete and simple.
- Even if you accomplish only part of your goal, reward yourself.
 - Go to dinner.
 - Plan for a movie.
 - Engage in any other fun activity you like.
- Give yourself enough time to reach your goals.
 - Don't rush through your plans.
 - Take time to plan your strategies.
 - Don't give up if things don't immediately go your way.
- Be kind to yourself.
 - Don't criticize yourself if you have to revise or change your goals.
 - Laugh at yourself a little, and resolve to try again.
 - Recognize and celebrate the evidence of your resilience and dedication toward making an effort to change your life.
 - Seek support from a family member or friend.

Reflection

What has your past experience been with trying to meet a goal you set for yourself?

How would you define success in terms of meeting your goal?

When you think back on trying to meet your goals, what strategies worked well for you? Which did not work so well?

How do you think setting SMART goals could increase your chances of successfully reaching your goals?

Feedback

Rate this exercise on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest.

This exercise was helpful overall.

1 2 3 4

It helped me learn something new.

1 2 3 4

It helped me reach my goals.

1 2 3 4