Setting & Reaching Your Goals
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Which Goals Will Make Me Happy?

Which Goals Should I Pursue?
Not All Goals Lead to Thriving

- **Extrinsic** goals are about external rewards or validation
  - Accumulation of wealth
  - Fame or popularity
  - Power over others
- Even if you reach them, the happiness you get is fleeting

But Why?

- They don’t satisfy your **basic psychological needs**

And What Are Those?

- According to **Self-Determination Theory**, they are:
  - Competence
  - Relatedness
  - Autonomy
**Competence:** Acquiring and Using Knowledge or Skills

**Relatedness:** Feelings of connection and belonging

**Autonomy:** Choosing to do things that are authentically you
More on **Autonomy**

- When behavior is initiated through choice as an expression of oneself (self-determined) = **autonomous**
- When behavior is initiated and regulated through external factors = **controlled**
  - Rewards
  - Pressure from others

**Autonomy = Good**

**Control = Bad**

- Intrinsic motivation (for its own sake)
- Interest & enjoyment
- Creativity
- Cognitive flexibility/ openmindedness
- Emotional tone
- Persistence

**What Autonomy Isn’t**

- NOT the same thing as “independent”
- It’s about choice - feeling like adopting a goal is about something coming from inside you
How to Set Goals Effectively

Be Specific
Challenge Yourself

Two Keys to Setting a Goal

**Specificity:** Exactly what do you want to achieve?

**Difficulty:** Are you challenging yourself? Setting the bar high?

Why is Being **Specific** So Important?

- Creates a clear standard
- Makes discrepancy more salient
- Helps to identify right course of action
- Answer this question: *How will I know when I’ve succeeded?*
Why is Greater **Difficulty** Helpful?

- Large discrepancies are
  - more easily detected
  - create greater “discomfort,” thus more motivating
  - draw on greater resources (often unconsciously)

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**Why is Greater Difficulty Helpful?**

- Answer these questions: *Am I selling myself short? Am I capable of more?* (be sure to consider what you’ve already got on your plate)

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The High Performance Cycle

How Can We Be Smart About Commitment?

- By committing when chances of success are good
- And disengaging when chances of success are slim

According to Fantasy Realization Theory there are 3 ways to think about a potential goal:

- Fantasizing (indulging) - thinking only about the positive future
- Dwelling - thinking only about obstacles that stand in the way
- Mental Contrasting

Mental Contrasting
Mental Contrasting

- Literally contrasting the positive future with negative reality (going back and forth)
  - Makes future seem like something to be achieved
  - Obstacles seem like something to be overcome
  - You experience the necessity to act

It’s smart! Likelihood of success determines your commitment

How to Use MC

- Think of a goal you are pursuing (or might pursue)
- List 4 positive aspects that you associate with reaching this goal. What does a happy ending look like?
- List 4 obstacles that stand in the way of reaching this goal.
How to Use MC

Elaborate (in writing, in order) on:
- 1st positive aspect
- 1st obstacle
- 2nd positive aspect
- 2nd obstacle

Imagine the events and experiences as vividly as possible! Let your mind go! Take as much time and space as you need to write down what you are thinking.

Mental Contrasting Leads To...

- Planning
- Taking Responsibility
- Feeling energized
- Immediacy of action
- Effort
- Achievement

The Mindset for Success
Being Good
*Proving* your ability, worth, or likeability
- To yourself or to others
- Wanting to do it perfectly, or better than others
- *I want to do well at work to prove my talent*

Getting Better
*Developing* ability, learning & mastering skills
- Emphasis on progress, improvement, growth
- *I want to develop my talent through my work*

Beliefs Create Mindsets
- Abilities are **fixed** => **Be Good** Mindset
- Abilities can **grow** => **Get Better** Mindset
Be Good Leads To….

- Vulnerability when things get hard
  - If this is so hard, I must not be good

- Negative feedback $\rightarrow$ withdrawal or anxiety $\rightarrow$ poor performance

Be Good Leads To….

- "Shallow" processing (skimming, cramming)

- Lower interest and enjoyment

- Less happiness (too controlled!)

Get Better Leads To….

- Persistence when things get hard
  - Even if this is hard, I can still improve

- Negative feedback $\rightarrow$ more effort, change of strategy $\rightarrow$ better performance!
Get Better Leads To….

- Deeper processing (creativity, better memory)
- Higher interest and enjoyment
- Greater happiness (more autonomy!)

Mindsets Change How You Cope With The Blues

Be Good leads to:
- Less active coping, problem solving
- Letting things go, not keeping up

Mindsets Change How Your Cope With The Blues

Get Better leads to
- More problem solving, taking action
- Keeping up with other aspects of life
- Greater feelings of control
In other words…

- When you have a **Be Good** goal: The worse you feel, the more you withdraw effort
- When you have a **Get Better** goal: The worse you feel, the more you **increase** effort

Getting Started

**Creating If-Then Plans**

Commitment Is **Not** Enough

- Actions speak louder than words.
- Practice what you preach.
- It’s easier said than done.
- You can talk the talk, but can you walk the walk?
- The road to hell is paved with good intentions.
- Strong commitment leads to failure more than 50% of the time.
Why Is It Hard To Get Started?

- Missing Opportunities to Act
- Now Knowing Which Action to Take

Missed Opportunities

I wanted to work out today, but I didn’t have time.

- Forgetting
- Procrastination
- Distraction
- Ambivalent motivation (conflict between this goal and others you may have)

Taking Action

I’d like to make a good impression on my boss.

- Goals can be attained in many different ways – which one do I choose?
- Flexibility is a blessing and a curse - it’s difficult to act swiftly when opportunities arise
- Opportunities may present themselves only for a short time
If-Then Plans
- If-then plans spell out what you will do, and when and where you will do it, in advance.
- If Situation X occurs, then I will perform Behavior Y

An Example
- I want to lose 5 pounds (goal)
- If my classes are over for the day, then I will go to the gym to workout
- If the dessert menu arrives, then I will just order coffee
- If I want a snack, then I will only have vegetables

How Do If-Then Plans Help Me Get Started?
- Situation and action become linked in your mind
- Situation becomes highly accessible (your brain is searching for it)
How Do *If-Then* Plans Help Me Get Started?

- Situation is therefore **easier to detect**
- You don’t miss opportunities!

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How Do *If-Then* Plans Help Me Get Started?

- Action happens **automatically** when situation is detected
- Conscious thought is not needed
- Requires less willpower
- You know which action to take!

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Does it Work?

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>If-Then Planners</th>
<th>Non-Planners</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sticking to Exercise</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>39%</td>
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<td>60%</td>
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<td>Breast Self Exam</td>
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Staying On Track
More Uses For If-Then Plans

Challenges Along The Way
Unpleasant or difficult obstacles

Challenges Along The Way
Temptations
Challenges Along The Way

Distractions

Disruptive internal states
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Nagging self-doubt

Some Things To Remember

If-then plans only work
- when your goal commitment is strong
- you believe you can succeed
Some Things To Remember

- Wording matters!!
  - Be specific about the situation and the action
  - Focus on what you will do, not what you won't do

Some Things To Remember

- Your plans need to address your critical obstacles
  - May involve some trial and error
  - Continue to make new plans as you need them