

Finding More Success With Goals

Chances are you have failed to reach a goal at some point. Maybe you signed up for a 5k but twisted your ankle part way into training, or you said you were going to learn a new language “this year,” but couldn’t make the time to practice.

There are several reasons why we fail to reach goals. Sometimes the goal we set is unattainable. Other times, we lack the motivation to follow through, or we realize along the way that the goal wasn’t as important as we initially thought. It can even be something out of our control – like an illness, economic downturn, or global pandemic. Although not meeting all our goals is part of being human, there are ways we can achieve more success and contentment with our efforts.

1. Connect your goals to your “why.”

When you consider setting a goal, take time to reflect on how it connects to your purpose. Why is this goal meaningful to you? How does it connect to your sense of purpose? Try filling in the blanks to this sentence: “I want to _____ so that I can _____.”

2. Break your goals down to make them more manageable.

Often the goals we set are significant – they cannot be achieved in a day, week, or maybe even a year. It’s crucial that we break our goals down over time, so we avoid feeling overwhelmed and so our goals are sustainable once they are achieved.

3. Proactively schedule “buffer time” for your goal completion timeline.

We tend to overestimate our abilities and underestimate the influence of external factors on our ability to achieve a goal. You can counteract this by giving yourself a buffer in achieving your goal. This increases your likelihood of being successful and your sense of contentment in your efforts.



4. Focus on continuation, instead of improvement.

When you are working towards a goal, it is natural to want to see progress each day or each week. Although you are likely getting closer to achieving your goal, there may be periods of time when you won’t see a return on your investments of time and energy. This is why it’s crucial to find gratification in your continued effort rather than immediate improvement.

5. Celebrate the small wins.

Finally, when you are working towards a goal, particularly one that challenges you, it’s important to celebrate the small wins. It’s human nature to continue to look towards the next task or challenge, without giving yourself credit for your current accomplishments (big or small). When you embark on your next goal, be sure to take time to celebrate the milestones along the way, whether it’s time- or completion-based.

If you would like a framework for goal setting that incorporates these tips, PACT is a goal-setting technique that stands for Purposeful, Actionable, Continuous, and Trackable. The PACT framework encourages purpose-driven, sustainable efforts towards your goals. PACT is an especially helpful tool for long-term, ambitious goals because it focuses on continuous growth.

5 ways to set more achievable goals. *Harvard Business Review* (2023). <https://hbr.org/2022/08/5-ways-to-set-more-achievable-goals>

The PACT method was created by BJ Fogg, PhD. See *Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything*. (2019). Virgin Books.

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According to a study from the University of Scranton, just 8% of people accomplish their goals by the end of the year.