

## ***Module Four: Goals Into Plans***

### The Problems with Goals

Goals are important, however there are three common ways that we set goals that could be setting us up for failure. The first problem with goals comes from the Goal Setting Cycle.

Typically, when we set a goal, we pick something that we'd like to accomplish, and then if we are really detailed, we even have a daily plan of action. A few days go by and we lose motivation, a few more days go by and the goal falls by the wayside as other things take priority, we put it off, procrastinate and say we'll make it up on the weekend.

But that's not the end of the Goal Setting Cycle, then, we call ourselves names, "your just lazy" "undisciplined" or whatever insults we like to use, and then finally we tuck the goal into the graveyard with all the other goals of the past.

The next time we go to set a goal, we get visitations of the ghosts of goals past, "I've heard this one before, you may say to yourself," "what makes you think you'll succeed this time?" you may find yourself saying. And so, even before we get started, it takes the wind out of our sails.

One way to shift this is to turn your goal into a plan. The word goal has rigid ideas of success and failure attached. We can make progress, but if we haven't fulfilled the goal 100% then we can feel as if we've failed. A plan is more flexible and has more wiggle room.

### **Solution #1 – Call it a Plan.**

Now, there is another way we sabotage ourselves with our plans. We make plans that are too vague or not detailed enough to follow through. Use the acronym, SMARTER to make SMARTER plans. The acronym SMARTER stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, on a Timeline, and Evaluate and Reward.

What is your plan? \_\_\_\_\_

When working with plans, don't pick more than three to focus on at a time, better even to pick just one at a time and implement it until it becomes a new habit.

Get Specific – Know what you will do when to achieve this plan. Dial it down to daily actions and put it in your planner. If it's not in your planner, it's not going to happen.

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Make it Measurable – How will you know when you've achieved the action steps? How can you measure your progress?

Achievable – is the plan under your control? Is it within your power to make it happen? For example, if you have a plan to change your spouse’s behavior, it’s not within your control.

Realistic – Make sure your plan is doable in the time that you’ve allotted yourself.

On A Timeline – By when will you have achieved this? What are your milestones?

Evaluate your Results. Pay attention to your results as you go. Perhaps you need to adjust your schedule to make it work for you. Pay attention to what’s working and what isn’t working.

Reward – All too often we forget to celebrate our wins and so we end up thinking that we are losing the game even though we are winning. What are your milestones, and how will you celebrate them?

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### **Solution #2: Make a SMARTER Plan.**

Sometimes the way we set a goal can cause us to fail if we are giving our unconscious mind unclear directions and this has to do with our language.

Our language has the power to direct our focus and attention and it also has an influence on our unconscious mind.

As a life and business coach, I often ask my clients what they want. In response I usually hear a long list of what they don’t want, “I don’t want to be overweight anymore,” “I don’t want to stress at my job anymore,” “I don’t want to feel like I’m lacking purpose anymore.”

But knowing what we don’t want isn’t useful as useful as knowing what you DO want.

As a white water raft guide, I learned the value of staying focused on what you do want. We had a saying, “where you point your boat, that’s where the river will take you.”

We were on a three day trip down the Deschutes River, it was day two of our expedition and we came up on White Horse Rapid. Now White Horse is a class four rapid. To give you an idea of the rating system; class one is still water, class two is bumps and giggles, class three is you can dump your crew and pick them up at the bottom, class four is you better know what you are doing, class five – nobody runs a class five, except drunk and on a dare, and class six – well, it’s un-runnable.

Before we run the rapid, we park our boats on the bank and walk out to the overlook. As guides, it’s our job to check the flow of the water, pay attention to the current, and pick our path through the rapid from a safe vantage point. So as guides we are mentally marking out our path down the river and talking about the flow of the water.

Now in the middle of this rapid, is a big rock jutting out of the water, and we call it OH SHMACK rock (but as guides we had another name for OH SHMACK). The goal is to find the current that will take you close to the rock, but will carry you around it. If you hit the rock, it could pin your boat against it, and it could cause you grief, it's not a safe place to dump your boat. So, anyway, us guides are talking about the current and flow of water, and on our way back the boats, I hear our fearless leader Martin, muttering under his breath, "I'm not going to hit the rock, I'm not going to hit the rock, I'm not going to hit the rock." It was funny, we giggled, undocked our boats and headed out.

Martin, our senior leader had spent nine years on this river and he was the first one down. He had our gear boat, full of sleeping bags, the stove, and food supplies. He pushed his boat off the bank, sailed around the corner and what did we hear? "OH SMACK!@!#\$!"

We scurried around the corner to find Martin in a sea of gear spread across the water and trying to pick up his load.

So, what happened? Martin was a pro on this river, 9 years of experience. Think of the phrase, "I'm not going to hit the rock," what does that phrase bring to mind? Hitting the rock! You see a mental picture of it, and maybe see the gear even fly about. 9 years of experience wiped out through one simple phrase.

What we focus on – that's where our mind will take us. Martin had a clear goal, "not hitting the rock" but this goal speaks to what isn't wanted rather than what you do want.

This has to do with how the brain works, it interprets our language through making mental pictures. Consciously we understand the word "don't" but don't doesn't translate in our unconscious mind. I'm going to ask you not to do something, will you try not to do it? Don't think of a yellow butterfly because as you do it will turn blue and fly out the window. What did your mind do? It pictured the yellow butterfly turning blue and flying out the window!

It's these mental pictures that speak directly to our unconscious mind and primes our brain to focus on what we are talking about. So if you want to engage your unconscious mind to work for you, give your mind clear directions about what you do want rather than what you don't want.

Think of the phrase, "I'm not going to eat sugar anymore" what does that tune your brain to notice? Sugar! Now think of the phrase, "I'm going to eat healthy with lots of fruits and vegetables" and what does that tune your brain for? Notice your mental pictures.

Now think of the plan, "I want to get out of debt." What does that tune your mind to. How do you feel in your body when you say that plan? Probably the heaviness of debt. Now, contrast that with the phrase, "I want to create a surplus of money." How does that phrase feel? What is that phrase tuning your attention to?

### **Solution #3: Use Positive Language.**

Make sure you are giving your unconscious mind clear directions of what you want it to focus on so that it can be working for you and not against you.

### **Cue Your Brain Into your Plan**

Now, you can cue your brain into your plan by visualization.

Imagine seeing in your mind's eye, you have achieved your plan. What are you seeing? What are you hearing? What are you saying to yourself? What are you feeling? Make it as real as possible.

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Use this visualization as a way to stay focused on your plan, and it's a great source of motivation for following through.

This works on a couple of levels. One, it tells your unconscious mind what to focus on so that it can work for you and two, it spurs your motivation for staying on track.

Also, as you visualize it, you are in essence trying on this new change. Sometimes what we think we want isn't what we really want. As you visualize having it, you may notice there is a downside to achieving this plan.

## **The Higher Purpose**

Sometimes when we pick a goal – or plan - it isn't what we really want. If we focus just on the goal, we could find ourselves working against our own purposes. Even if we are successful, we could end up feeling frustrated and dissatisfied even if we are successful in the goal.

Every goal or plan has a higher purpose. If we aren't paying attention to this higher purpose, we may be sabotaging our own efforts. You can find the higher purpose of your plan by asking the question: What will that get for me? Ask the question over and over again until you find a sense of something.

I had one client come in, we'll call him Ted. Ted was feeling stuck in his career and wanted to make more money. He was an independent insurance agent and wanted to achieve more sales. Here's how our conversation went.

Holly: What is your goal?

Ted: I want to make more money.

Holly: What will that get for you?

Ted: I won't stress as much.

Holly: If you could stress less, what will that get for you?

Ted: I will be able to relax more.

Holly: What will that get for you?

Ted: I will be able to enjoy life more.

Holly: What will that get for you?

Ted: I will be happier.

So, what Ted really wanted was to be happier. If he would spend more hours at work, working harder to make more money, he would be missing the point. He would likely end up feeling frustrated and unfulfilled and lack of motivation with the goal because what he really wanted was to be happier.

You don't have to wait until you achieve X amount of dollars to feel happier – you can have it now.

There are many ways for Ted to feel happier, he could even create small habits to connect him with the feeling of happiness. The happiness that he is after also becomes the fuel to power the original goal.

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If we are setting goals or making plans without the awareness of the higher purpose, we can be working against ourselves and feeling frustrated with our efforts. So, identify your plan's higher purpose, and then find ways to expand that feeling in your life.

Connecting with this feeling or higher purpose will give you a greater sense of satisfaction and fulfillment and will also help you stay motivated with your plan.

What is your plan? State it in positive terms. \_\_\_\_\_

What will that get for you? \_\_\_\_\_

What will that get for you? \_\_\_\_\_

What will that get for you? \_\_\_\_\_

What will that get for you? \_\_\_\_\_

What will that get for you? \_\_\_\_\_

Your Plan's Higher Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Defining Your Plans**

Make longterm, medium and short term plans to stay focused. Pay attention to the higher purpose of each plan.

Longterm plans range from 1-2 years:

The Plan

The Higher Purpose

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Medium plans range from 3-6 months:

The Plan

The Higher Purpose

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Short term plans range from 1-3 months:

The Plan

The Higher Purpose

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