

GOAL-SETTING AND DECISION-MAKING

“If you have made mistakes, there is always another chance for you. You may have a fresh start any moment you choose, for this thing we call ‘failure’ is not the falling down, but the staying down.”

—Mary Pickford

GOAL-SETTING

Introduction

Goal-setting is a powerful technique for helping a mentee develop a solid foundation for future planning and organization. By knowing what he/she wants to achieve in life, a mentee may know where they want to concentrate and what to improve. If mentees can set well-defined goals, they can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals. However, one of the most important tasks of the mentor is to assist the mentee in setting short-term goals (less than a year) and long-term goals (more than five years). Aspiring to achieve long-term goals gives the mentee short-term motivation. For instance, a mentee may want to attend a major university (long-term goal). First, he/she needs to do well on the S.A.T. (short-term goal). According to Joan K. Carter (1993), a mentee should establish a long-term goal before a short-term goal can be explored. A mentee may not see the need to work toward a goal without understanding the relationship between the short-term goal and the long-term goal. For example, graduating from high school may be a motivating factor to help a mentee work toward the short-term goal of passing the eighth grade.

There are several important factors to consider before goal-setting with a mentee (Carter, 1993):

- Establish a relationship of trust over time.
- Establishing confidentiality is prerequisite to goal-setting.
- The mentee should be directly involved in setting goals. With the mentor's guidance, the mentee must articulate each goal, and it must be genuinely *his/her* goal.
- A short-term goal that can be easily achieved is a good starting point; for example, simply to complete all math homework assignments for the next week.
- Goals must be specific and measurable. For instance, "Mary will complete and turn in all English assignments next week."
- To assure that an attempt will be made by mentees to meet their goals, a written commitment contract should be established between the mentor and the mentee.

If a mentee fails to achieve his/her goal, examine these possible factors:

- The goal may have been too difficult to achieve.
- The goal may have been developed without the active involvement and commitment of the mentee.
- The mentee may be fearful of achieving a self-enhancing goal. Many at-risk adolescents have low self-esteem and believe they are "losers." They often become accustomed to making poor choices, reinforcing their negative self-image.
- The mentor may need to speak to the mentee about his/her fears of being successful and making self-enhancing decisions.

Purpose of Goal-Setting

Goal-setting helps the mentee to strive to achieve. Although goal-setting may be challenging, it is generally worthwhile. Its intention is to increase efficiency and effectiveness by specifying the

mentee's desired outcomes. Hellriegel, Slocum, and Woodman & Martens (1992) (1987) find the following to be the most important purposes of goal-setting:

- Goals guide and direct behavior.
- Goals provide clarity.
- Goals provide challenges and standards.
- Goals reflect what the goal setters consider important.
- Goals help improve performance.
- Goals increase the motivation to achieve.
- Goals help increase mentee's pride and satisfaction in his/her achievements.
- Goals improve mentee's self-confidence.
- Goals help decrease negative attitude.

People who use goal-setting effectively suffer less from stress, are better able to concentrate, show more self-confidence, and seem to feel happier.

Deciding Your Goal

Mentors should help guide mentees when deciding goals, making sure that the mentee considers broadly all aspects of his/her life. For instance, a mentee's goal should take into account the following issues:

- **Artistic** Does your mentee want to achieve any artistic goals? Does he have/need any training to achieve them?
- **Attitude** Is any aspect of your mentee's mindset holding him/her back? Are any personal behaviors upsetting to him/her? If so, set goals to improve or cure the problem, even if the goal is only to get help.
- **Education** Is there any specific knowledge that the mentee wants to acquire? What information and skill will the mentee need to achieve other goals?
- **Pleasure** What does your mentee want to enjoy? Mentee should ensure that some time is reserved for personal pleasure or satisfaction!
- **Social** Does your mentee have any social ambitions?
- **Physical** Are there any athletic goals that your mentee wants to achieve, or does he/she want good health deep into old age? What steps will your mentee choose to achieve this?
- **Career** What career is your mentee seeking?
- **Family** How does your mentee want to be seen by members of his/her immediate family?
- **Financial** How much does your mentee want to earn and by what career stage?

(Taken from *Mind Tools LTD 1996. Mind Tools—Planning & Goal-Setting* [online]. Available: www.mindtools.com/index.html)

As soon as the mentee has decided on goals in these categories, he/she should prioritize them. The mentor should ensure that the goals that have been selected by mentee, not by parent, teacher, peers, or by mentor.

Goal-Setting Model

A mentee must formulate goals to travel the road to success. The SMART guidelines can help to set effective goals.

SMART

- S-Specific** A goal of graduating from high school is too general. Specify how this will be accomplished. (Study more in order to receive better grades.)
- M-Measurable** Establish criteria for how a goal is to be achieved. Measurable does not refer to a timeline; it means determining a way to measure the mentee's success in completing the long-range goal.
- A-Action-oriented** Be proactive in taking action that will result in reaching the desired goal.
- R-Realistic** Strive for attainable goals, considering the resources and constraints relative to the situation.
- T-Timely** Allow reasonable time to complete each goal, but not so much time the mentee loses focus or motivation.

(Adapted from *Discovery Focus on Your Values and Accomplish Your Goals*. Franklin Quest, 1996)

Assignment Sheet

Subjects						
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Test Date						
Next Report Due						

Activity

Directions: Place a check in the column to indicate which are of value to you. (Check five)

_____ Going to college is a good decision.

_____ Finding a job right out of high school is more important.

_____ Finishing high school is important to me.

_____ Having a car is important.

_____ Liking my job is important.

_____ Living in a clean, safe area is important to me.

_____ It is important to have spending money.

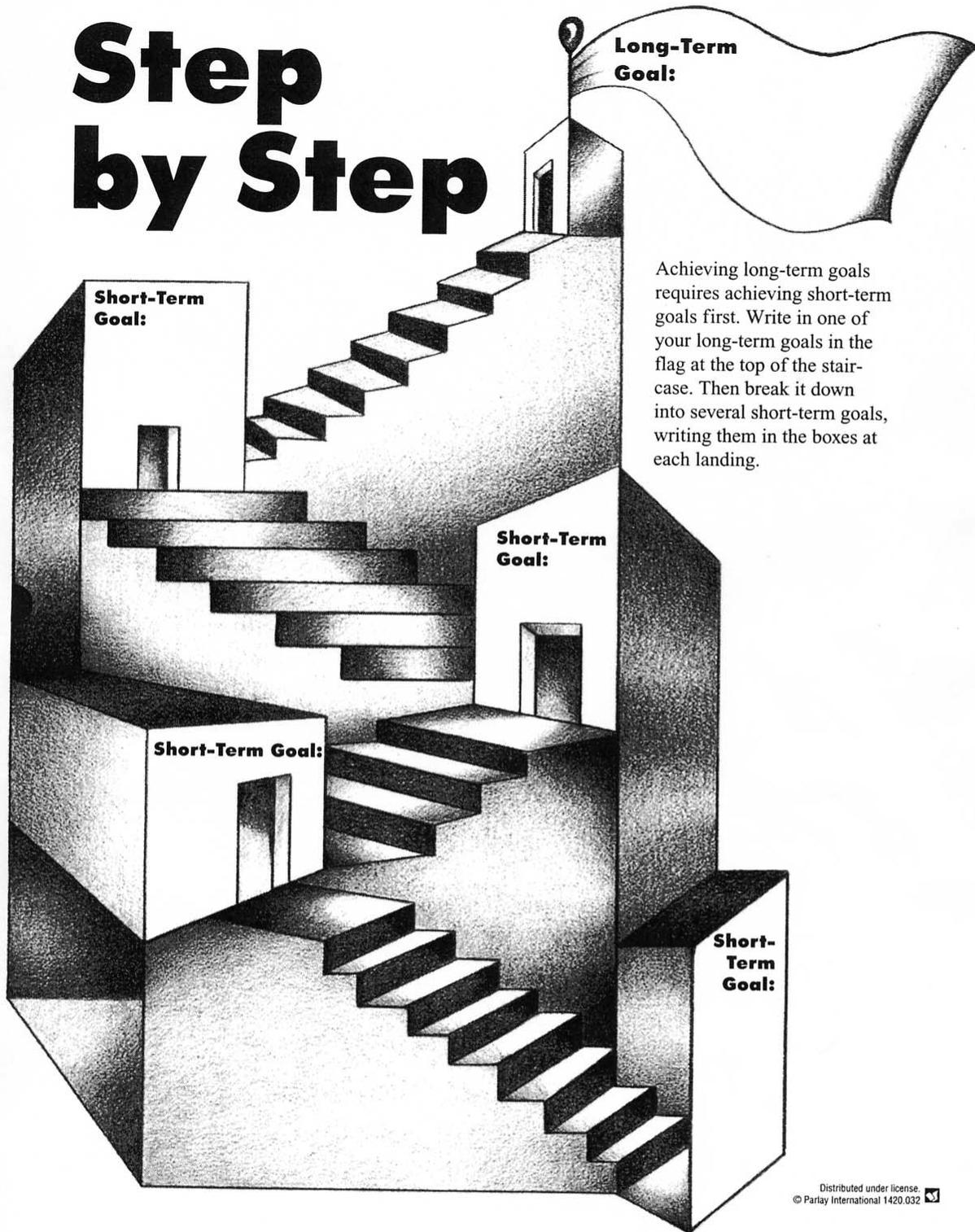
_____ Having friends is important.

_____ Spending time with your family is important.

_____ Something other than what is listed above is of value. (Specify)

✓	Goals	Value #
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
	5.	
	6.	
	7.	
	8.	
	9.	
	10.	
	11.	
	12.	
	13.	
	14.	
	15.	

Step by Step



Achieving long-term goals requires achieving short-term goals first. Write in one of your long-term goals in the flag at the top of the staircase. Then break it down into several short-term goals, writing them in the boxes at each landing.

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Name _____ Date _____

What Will the Future Bring?

Directions: Answer each of the following questions about your future.

What Do You Want to Achieve *Five* Years from Now?

High school diploma? _____

Part-time job? _____ Doing what? _____

Full-time job? _____ Doing what? _____

Have your own apartment? _____ Where? _____

Own a used car? _____ Paying for a new car? _____

Accepted into college? _____ College choice? _____

A one-week vacation in _____

A longer trip to _____

What Do You Want to Achieve *Fifteen* Years from Now?

College degree? _____ From _____ Major _____

Master's degree? _____ From _____ Major _____

Full-time job? _____ Occupation _____

Own your home? _____ Location _____

Salary range:

\$10,000–\$20,000 _____

\$21,000–\$40,000 _____

\$50,000–\$75,000 _____

\$? _____

Married? _____

Children? _____

How many? _____

Two-week vacation each year _____ One-month trip to (location) _____

Own new car (no payments) _____

Help in the community? _____ How? _____

Decision-Making

Introduction

Decision-making may not always be an easy task for adolescents (e.g., staying out late with friends the night before exams). The mentor's role is to advise mentees that they need to be the key decision-maker under any circumstances. Mentees will also need to learn to acknowledge the responsibilities that go along with those decisions. With that in mind, the "*Eight Steps in Making a Decision*" (Robbins, 1991) will help guide the mentees to make rational decisions.

- State the problem objectively. (Define what is happening.)
- Gather information about the problem. (Do not try to solve problem.)
- List pros and cons of the problem.
- Develop alternatives. (Do not force yourself into only one choice, and be sure that each solution solves the problem.)
- Analyze alternatives. (Look at pros and cons.)
- Select an alternative. (Mentee makes a decision based on what is best for him/her in this situation, keeping the goal in mind.)
- Implement the alternative. (Test.)
- Evaluate end results of decision made. (Make changes as necessary.)

If mentee follows through these steps with assistance from mentor often enough, the mentee will become familiar with the process and will be capable of applying it to any future complicated decision.

There are **three different types of decision-making styles: Inactive, Reactive, and Proactive.** An **inactive decision-maker** is someone who fails to make choices. A mentee who has this style of decision-making usually procrastinates until a future time because of indecision. Eventually, one option merely plays itself out. Mentees who have this style have difficulty developing self-confidence, and feel that they have no control of their destiny.

A **reactive-decision maker** is someone who allows peers, siblings, parents, etc. to make the decision for them. Mentees with this style are easily influenced by what others think, do, or suggest. They are easily persuaded by peer-pressure, develop a negative self-esteem, and have a need to be liked by others. Mentors should not make decisions without the participation of the mentee; otherwise, the mentee's needs and wants go unfulfilled.

A **proactive-decision maker** is someone who follows the eight steps of decision-making and assumes responsibility for the consequences. In this case, the mentee takes on responsibility rather than being driven by circumstances and conditions or being influenced by others. Mentees with this style of decision-making often experience a feeling of empowerment or inspiration because they know that they are in control of their own destinies.

Goal-Setting/Decision-Making

Lesson Plan

Objectives: To help the mentor develop a solid foundation of planning, organizing his/her future, and making sound decisions by setting short- and long-term goals using the **Smart Goals** model.

Icebreaker: The instructor should ask mentors the following questions:

- How did you go about making decisions?
- Did you rely on your parents' opinion or your own?
- What goals did you set for yourself?

Lesson: The instructor will discuss:

- The purpose of goal-setting
- Deciding your goal
- **Smart Goals** model
- Decision-making

Materials:

- Assignment sheet: Goal-setting
- Activity Handouts: Goals, Goal-Planning, Step by Step, Defining Your Goals, What Will The Future Bring?
- Goal-Planning Activity
- Activity: Decision-Making: Weighing Your Options
- Eight Steps to Decision-Making
- Activity II
- A Problem-Solving Worksheet
- Forced Choice Activity

Activity I

Use the “Eight Step” method for this activity. Participants will divide into small groups and each group will be given a certain “problem” (e.g., a mentee wants to run away from home). Together, the participants in the group will go through each of the eight steps and discuss how they would help to solve the problem.

In the steps listed below, write your response for each statement.

- Mentee gets pregnant and does not know what to do.
- Mentee wants to drop out of school.
- Mentee wants to start drinking and using drugs because his/her friends are doing it.
- Mentee wants to join a popular gang that commits petty crimes.
- Mentee feels pressured into having sex with a boyfriend/girlfriend.

Eight Steps to Decision-Making

1. State the problem.
2. Gather information about the problem.
3. List pros and cons of the problem.
4. Develop alternatives.
5. Analyze alternatives.
6. Make a decision based on what is best for you and the situation. (Select alternative.)
7. Implement an alternative. (Test.)
8. Evaluate end results of decision made.

Activity II

Mentor will read the following story to the class or mentee. Then go through the eight steps of decision-making and discuss how the mentee might solve the problem.

Joseph is a hard working young man and an excellent student with high grades. He has worked as a stock boy at a neighborhood grocery store since he was 14 years old and has saved almost every paycheck he has earned at the store. Now that Joseph is 16, he wants to buy a car with his savings. However, Joseph has a problem. He also wants to go to college and has only one more year of high school to graduate with honors. Even though his parents are very proud of him, they have told him that he will have to decide what to do with his money. Joseph's parents have made it very clear to him that he will not receive any financial support from them.

A Problem-Solving Worksheet

Often a problem seems difficult to solve because you limit your options for solutions. This exercise allows you to come up with more solutions than you may have thought possible.

First, identify the problem (Be specific).

Now the solution. Use all the blanks. Write any solution you think of, even if it's not practical. Remember, a "crazy" idea can trigger the most innovative solutions.

<hr/>	<hr/>

This is a good time to take a break. Set this aside for a day or two. Let these solutions roll around in your mind. When you pick up this list again, choose those that seem like the three best solutions. Write down your choices.

Solution:

Why?

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

Look over your solution lists again. Take another break if you can. Then pick your favorite solution and write about it in more detail.

Solution:

Activity: Forced Choice

This activity will have students recognize the effects of personal values and peer pressure when making a decision.

1. Place signs in each corner of the room to designate four different choices: **Strongly Agree**, **Agree**, **Disagree**, and **Strongly Disagree**.
2. Have the students stand in the middle of the room.
3. Read the first statement: “Women are generally more sensitive than men.”
4. The students are then to choose a corner of the room that represents their choice.
NOTE: *It is important that they make their choices with **NO talking**.*
5. Repeat, using the following statements, each time having the students choose the corner of the room that best fits their choice of each statement.

Statements:

- Women are generally more sensitive than men.
- I would ditch school and go with my friends.
- If the principal announces that a window is broken and asks for information about the perpetrator, and I knew who did it, I would tell.
- I think it is OK to push and shove people I don't like.
- School is more work than fun.
- Students don't give each other enough respect.
- Boys are better at sports than girls.
- Adults don't give kids enough respect.
- Scientists should not be allowed to carry out experiments on animals.
- People can be judged by the clothes that they wear.
- It is better to give than to receive.
- It is necessary to have a college education to make it in life.
- Teachers are usually right.

Ask the following questions:

1. Notice the four signs. Which choice is not represented here? (Answer: “I don't know or care.”)
2. How did it feel when you were forced to make a decision?
3. Did you always go with your friends to the same corner or was the choice your own?
4. Did you feel any pressure from your friends to select a particular corner?
5. What kinds of pressure did you feel?
6. Did anyone make a decision that was different from everyone in the class? How did that feel for the student and the rest of the class?

DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

AGREE

STRONGLY AGREE

DECISION-MAKING

Weighing Your Options

You have a decision to make. So you list the options, measure the advantages against the disadvantages and make a choice.

Is that the way you make your decisions? If your answer is "sometimes," you're not alone. For a variety of reasons, people don't always evaluate their options when making decisions. Take some time now to practice your decision-making skills.

Pick a decision you have to make that involves a choice between two options. (Many decisions are more complicated, involving three or more options, but let's start with something simple.) Write the advantages and disadvantages under each one. Then consider how important each list item is. Give it a numerical value from 1 to 10. Write the number next to the item. For each option, add up the advantages and the disadvantages.

DECISION:			
Option #1:		Option #2:	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
Total A	Total B	Total C	Total D

Now, subtract the disadvantages from the advantages. Remember, the resulting number might be negative. The option with the highest positive number (or lowest negative number if they're both negative) should be the best choice.

OPTION #1	OPTION #2
Total A _____	Total C _____
- Total B _____	- Total D _____
Score _____	Score _____

How do you feel about the scores? Your reaction to the scores can help you understand what your inner wishes are, with respect to this decision.

Decisions are often too complex to reduce to addition and subtraction. But chances are, you can get a clearer picture of the pros and cons by doing this exercise.

You can do this exercise with decisions that involve more options. Just list the advantages and disadvantages of all the options and compare the final numbers.

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