



## Think Backward to Achieve Goals

Most people know it's important to have goals, but they don't write them down. Those who do often neglect to describe them in detail. As a result, people remain frustrated with only vague longings and desires that never materialize.

Because they have

not put their goals down on the page, they have found it difficult to formulate the steps necessary to achieve them.

Here's an exercise worth trying: After specifying your goal, make it specific. Decide what, when, where, how much, etc. Now, work backward to formulate your steps. For example, if your goal is to buy a house, what must happen before you can do it? You need a date, of course. So decide on the date you will buy your house. Keep going—what comes before that? You need to choose a house. And before that, you need a real estate agent. And before that, you need to qualify for a loan. And before that, what must happen? Keep going backward, asking, "Before event X, what must occur?" You will uncover the numerous incremental steps required to achieve your goal. The more steps you write down, the more attainable your goal will become. Each step is likely to be more manageable. This approach to goal attainment establishes a realistic timeline, which is essential to your success. This procedure also transforms your longings and desires into specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-specific goals. Watch your excitement mount. It will fuel your energy and your intention to achieve what you want.

## Now—Let's Talk Graduate School

Congratulations on graduating from college. Yes, you may have been in school since age five, but don't dismiss the idea of an advanced degree and graduate school just yet. Examine the benefits and upside arguments. You're beyond basic course requirements, so graduate courses are almost entirely those that interest you, which means they're almost always more fun. It's often easier to get good grades in graduate school, and research shows irrefutably that you will probably earn more money later in your career. Plenty of scholarships and grants are out there, and most master's degree programs require only two more years of school.

## Psychotherapy: Not What You Think

If you think all professional counseling is the same, characterized by what's been depicted in movies and comic strips, rest assured, you've gotten the wrong idea. There are many different approaches to professional counseling, but by far the most popular is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). That's a fancy way of saying that the counseling approach focuses on the important areas of what you think, how you feel, and what you do. The goal is to get the changes you want in your life. CBT has been extensively studied, and it works. It's frequently brief, time-limited, action-oriented, and measurable. You start with a goal, track your progress, and "team" with your therapist to get the job done. If you've thought about professional counseling, but stigma and comic strip images are holding you back, talk to CONCERN: EAP or your health care provider to learn more about an approach to counseling that will work for you. It might be CBT.

## New Occupational Hazard: Sitting Too Long

Are you getting 30 minutes of exercise daily but spending 18 hours sitting—at a computer, behind the wheel of a car, or in front of the TV? Health guidelines view you as a "physically active person," but maybe this is not such a good description. This sedentary lifestyle increases the risk of gaining weight and can lead to cardio-metabolic health risks. Can you engineer more physical activity into your job? If you're feeling a bit guilty about not

getting more exercise, grab opportunities that pop up during the day to get more physical activity. They are probably more plentiful than you think. Walk farther to your car, take the stairs, straighten up your office, walk a bit farther to a different coffee shop or walk to the next office to consult on a problem rather than using e-mail or instant messaging.

### **Preventive Maintenance for Negativity**

There can be many reasons for workplace negativity, but an underlying theme is often workplace communication issues between coworkers, departments, or management. A key intervention is bringing coworkers together to improve communication, but don't do it only when things reach crisis proportions. Meet regularly with your work group, and always ask, "Folks, do we have any concerns among ourselves about communication?" This won't solve every negativity issue in the organization, but predictable, regular meetings where your group poses this question to itself will pack a wallop to help reduce negativity. You'll notice that negativity or concerns diminish over time, but don't drop the question! Make it your preventive maintenance.

### **Kids' Size and Sports Cautions**

It's summer and sports are in full swing. Be cautious about pushing youngsters to compete with older, larger kids in sports competition levels where they are not physically matched, even if their skills are. Smaller kids are more susceptible to getting the short end of the stick, with a higher risk of injury in contact or collisions. Growth plates at the ends of long bones in young teens are also more prone to injury because they aren't as completely developed as they are in older teens. (Source: National Institutes of Health, News in Health, June 2009)

### **Talk Less, Listen More, Gain Much**

Take one day at work to practice this self-awareness exercise: Spend 75% of any conversation listening instead of speaking. This is what conflict resolution and negotiating expert Robert Mayer calls the "75/25 Partnering Secret." The exercise forces you to participate in more active listening. It's been observed that if we listen more in our relationships, we experience less conflict. Note any discoveries of increased workplace harmony, reduced conflict, or interruption of negativity that your experiment produces.

### **Reaching the "Point of Overwhelm"**

If you have reached "the point of overwhelm," act to recapture a feeling of control over your life. Whether you have 101 things to do or only a few that are daunting and dreadful, start by creating a list of what needs to be done, how you will do it, what order each item will take, and when it will happen. This technique calms the "fight or flight" reaction triggered by stress. Do this at night prior to going to bed and again in the morning upon awakening, and don't stop until the distressful period has passed.

**Remember: employees and eligible dependents can request CONCERN counseling and work/life services by phoning our 800 number, answered live 24/7. You can request CONCERN: EAP services on-line at: <https://www.concern-eap.com/Employees/bRequestforServicesb/tabid/87/language/en-US/Default.aspx>**

**Here are some recent quotes from employees who used CONCERN: EAP explaining what they liked best about the services:**

*"I really liked the way the counselor worked with me and helped me straighten out a lot of problems."*

*"You actually listen! And the response was appropriately tailored to my situation."*

*"The accessibility and kindness of the representative was excellent. I was so pleasantly surprised when I received my package that contained resources for a new parent. Thank you so much! It's so useful!"*

**CONCERN: EAP  
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