



Tips for Setting Goals and Achieving Them

When life features constant changes and unpredictability beyond your control, managing daily life through goal setting can keep you calm and centered. This time can also create new opportunities to progress toward your bigger life goals.¹

The Can Do MS "Coronavirus and You" Toolkit provides tips in many different areas of life. After viewing these resources, we recommend taking a few minutes to put ideas into action by setting SMART goals in each of these areas.

You can continue to use these goal setting skills as you progress towards your big life goals!

Why are goals so hard to achieve?

Often, they're too big, too complicated, too vague and too open-ended

Possible areas for goal setting

- Knowledge
- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Relationships
- Symptom management
- Coping/adaptation
- Self-care

S.M.A.R.T. Goals are

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Time-limited

¹ Sarah DiGiulio. *9 Tips for dealing with the uncertainty of the coronavirus outbreak*. NBC News. Mar. 25, 2020. <https://www.nbcnews.com/better/lifestyle/9-tips-deal-uncertainty-coronavirus-outbreak-ncna1167821>. Accessed Apr. 1, 2020.

Set a S.M.A.R.T. goal in one area of managing life during the COVID-19 outbreak (e.g. staying active, eating healthy & safely, promoting your emotional & mental health, managing your MS enhancing your relationships, financial planning, overcoming isolation/social distancing, etc.):

The P.A.U.S.E. SYSTEM[®] can help you implement your S.M.A.R.T. goals:

Plan your Strategy

Account for Changes

Understand your Barriers

Slow your Pace

Exercise your Options

Plan your Strategy

- Planning your steps can help you be more successful
- Large plans produce anxiety and fear of failure
- Small, simple plans are safe, easier to implement, confidence-building, more likely to succeed

From Small Steps to Giant Leaps

Our brains are programmed to resist change.

By taking small steps, you:

- Bypass the anxiety and fear of failure
- Unlock creative ideas
- Create new connections in your brain so that it works with you instead of against you in the process of change

Make a small plan right now

What is your first small plan for achieving your goal? (be specific)

Account for Changes

- Select targets that are possible to change
- Select the behaviors you want to track (e.g., minutes of physical activity, calories eaten, friends called on the phone, quality time with family)
- Keep a record – tracking your activities makes you more aware of the small changes you make

How will you keep track of changes?

What method will you use for tracking changes:

Method: (e.g., journaling, chart on the wall, phone app, activity log)

Understand Your Barriers

- External Barriers
- Internal Barriers
- Brain Chatter
- Time Traps

External barriers:

- Need assistance with the planning process
- Life gets in the way – unforeseen events
- Lack of clarity about your goals
- Time, accessibility, or cost issues

What are your external barriers?:

Internal barriers:

- A goal with no plans
- Old habits that die hard
- Resistance to change or fear of something new
- Emotional distress; depression
- MS symptoms (e.g., fatigue, pain, weakness), relapses

What are your internal barriers?

Brain Chatter

- Rehashing the past – “I tried this before and nothing ever worked”
- All-or-nothing thinking – “If I can’t lose 100 lbs., why bother to try to lose 20?” “If I can’t exercise the way I used to, why bother to exercise at all?”
- Disqualifying the positive – “This was just a fluke...I’ll never be able to do it again...”
- Labeling – “This is dumb...” “I have MS so I can’t do this...” “
- “Misfortune telling” or predicting the future – “This is doomed to fail...”
- Putting other people’s needs before your own – “It’s selfish to focus on myself right now...”

What is your brain chatter?

Time Traps

- No time for the present moment
- Being on “automatic pilot”
- Anxieties, worries

What are your time traps?:

What will you do to overcome these barriers?

Strategy 1: _____

Strategy 2: _____

Slow Your Pace

- **Relaxation exercises**
 - Muscle relaxation
 - Imagery
 - Breathing
- **Mindfulness exercises**
 - Find an anchor in the present
 - Focus on what you can control now

Getting Your Plan Moving

- Remember “one day at a time...”
- Practice relaxation
 - Take a few minutes twice each day to:
 - Close your eyes and breathe slowly
 - Stay in the moment...trying to be “present”
 - Reaffirm your 1-2 simple plans to yourself
 - Visualize yourself actually doing these today!
- Be mindful of your plans and recommit to them every day
- Be tolerant of your lapses, but not so tolerant that you stop moving ahead

Exercise Your Options

- Where do you want to start?
(In what area of your life)
- When do you want to start?
(Exact date and time)
- What is your specific plan?
(What you will do)
- How will you keep track of progress?

How to Get Motivated

- Behavior change causes motivation, not the other way around

DO SOMETHING! (Don't wait for motivation)

- Keep it small and simple...Focus on realistic, measurable, short-term goals
- Rituals have power in our lives – so begin to create new rituals to attain your goals
- Strive for healthy attitudes:
 - Optimism
 - Self-confidence
 - Forgiveness (of self and others)
 - Humor
 - Sense of purpose

Your NEW PLAN

Starting on (day/date) _____, at (time) _____,

I will (specific what, when, where): _____

The barriers I could face include: _____

I will overcome these barriers by: _____

I will track my daily progress by: _____