HOW TO SET A SMART GOAL

“SMTP” stands for Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic, and Timed. SMART goals are often featured in a Veteran’s Personal Health Plan (PHP). To write one, begin by focusing on a goal that is important to a Veteran. This goal should tie into what really matters to them and closely rates to their Mission, Aspiration, Purpose (MAP).

After you have a general goal in mind, apply the principles of SMART goals to focus in on how to reach it. These are featured in the table below. As you help someone set a goal, remember the following:

- It is better to break a general goal down into smaller goals that are easier to reach, in order to increase the odds of success.
- The more detail the better. “I will exercise more” is very vague. “Starting on Monday, July 1, I will walk in the mall for 20 minutes and keep doing that every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday” is more detailed and incorporates all of the SMART elements.
- Make sure both you and the Veteran agree (at least to some degree) about the goal. Shared goal setting is a powerful process. Explain your reasoning.
- Don’t forget to follow up later to see how it is going with reaching the goal. If they are stalled out, is it best to change goals, or simplify it somehow?
- Table 1 is designed to help you take a Veteran through this process.

PUTTING THE SMART IN GOAL SETTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMART Goal Element</th>
<th>Questions to Consider</th>
<th>Your Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>• Be very clear and detailed about what you want to do and why.</td>
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<td>• What is required? What are the challenges?</td>
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<td>• What are your assets and resources?</td>
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### How to Write a SMART Goal

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<th>SMART Goal Element</th>
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| **M** Measurable   | • How much time will you spend?  
• How often (daily, weekly, monthly)?  
• How will you know you are making progress?  
• How will you know you have reached your goal? |             |
| **A** Action-Oriented | • What actions are needed to achieve the goal?  
• Describe the ones you will be taking. |             |
| **R** Realistic     | • Is this goal worth it?  
• Does the goal line up with your values?  
• Is the timing right?  
• Do you have what you need to reach the goal?  
• Is it really doable? |             |
| **T** Timed         | • How long do you need?  
• Are there any deadlines you have to meet?  
• When will you start? |             |
WRITE YOUR GOAL BELOW:

I will...


Once you finish this exercise, ask yourself the following:

- How do you make the person setting the goal more accountable? Can you call them, or have a team member do so? Is there a way to involve a friend or family member to help them?
- How can you or your team help them to succeed?
- Is it possible to involve a Whole Health Coach or Peer Partner who can support them?

AUTHOR(S)

“How to Set a SMART Goal” was written by J. Adam Rindfleisch, MPhil, MD (2014, updated 2017).

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