

HOW TO SET A SMART GOAL

“SMART” 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 in to 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

SMART Goal Element	Questions to Consider	Your Notes
Specific S	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be very clear and detailed about what you want to do and why.• What is required? What are the challenges?• What are your assets and resources?	

SMART Goal Element	Questions to Consider	Your Notes
M Measurable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What actions are needed to achieve the goal? • Describe the ones you will be taking. 	
R Realistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long do you need? • Are there any deadlines you have to meet? • When will you start? 	

WRITE YOUR GOAL BELOW:

I will...

This exercise was adapted from: Rollnick S, Miller W, Butler C. Motivational Interviewing in Health Care: Helping Patients Change Behavior. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2008.

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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