

ADVICE SHEET

Patient advice from Healthcare RM

Goal Setting

What do you want to achieve?

We all have ideas about things we would like to achieve in life. What maybe a simple objective for one person may seem to be a great challenge to another. Sometimes it can seem very difficult to see a way forward. This may be especially true following an injury and a period of reduced activity or physical incapacity.

We tend to lessen our activity following injury. Things that you took for granted become much more difficult and you may find yourself avoiding certain activities all together. Very often it's the enjoyable things that fall by the wayside. People generally find that setting some goals is a useful method by which we can move gradually forward.



Achievable

Ask yourself whether the goal is within reasonable reach. For instance, completing a marathon may not be an achievable goal in the near future if you've never run before. However, completing a 1K run may be.

How can setting goals help my function?

Goal setting is widely used by many people in many areas of life and work. This has enabled some guidelines to be established to help us manage our goals. These may seem a little daunting at first but with a little help and practice you will soon be able to set your own goals using these principles.

An important point to remember with all goal setting is that progress towards the final target or objective will probably need to be broken down into steps or stages, each with smaller goals along the way. Goals are not just there to test us. They are a way of moving from where we are to where we want to be. They help us to recognise our own successful progress and allow us to reward ourselves when each new goal is achieved. Research has also shown that setting activity related goals will speed up your recovery.

Rewarding / Enjoyable

This is really important. We are unlikely to do something if we don't see the point or don't enjoy it. So make sure is something you want to achieve because you used to enjoy it

Time limited

Try and decide upon a time frame. Being able to track your progress encourages you to keep going and reach your goal. Look for ways to chart your improvements. It may be that you feel a certain length of time is realistic. Or perhaps you have worked out how much progress you can make in a week and then you can work out how long it will take you to reach your goal. Always err on the side of caution; don't set yourself up to fail.

Finally; Check that your goal will fit in with your life or if not, make changes so that achieving your goal becomes a priority.

What is the best type of goal?; the one you are actually going to do. Don't set it because you feel you should, or someone else said you should. Get support and encouragement, and reward yourself when you succeed!

The five steps in goal setting—SMART

Specific goals

State exactly what you want to achieve and how you're going to manage it. Make sure it isn't vague. E.g. 'I want to get fit' is too vague, fit to do what? How will you know when you've achieved it? 'I want to be able to swim 3 lengths' is more specific. "I want to be able to pick up my son" is better than "I want to be able to do family things".

Measurable goals

How will you know when you have achieved your goal? State the proof you will need to show you have achieved your goal. A goal doesn't do you any good if there's no way of telling whether you've achieved it. "I want to feel better" isn't a very good goal because it's not specific and it's difficult to measure. "I want to be able to walk 1.5 miles, on the flat, by x date" is a better goal because it's specific and measurable.

Examples of a goal that follow the SMART formula

Goal: To walk for 30 minutes
When do I want to achieve it by: 4 weeks
How I'm going to do it: Set a plan using the graded activity chart, building up walking distance in small equal steps

John wanted to achieve this goal. Initially he could only walk for 10 minutes. He set himself a plan to build up his activity over a period of 4 weeks, using a stepped approach. He stuck to this plan on both good and bad days. At the end of 4 weeks, he had built his activity levels up sufficiently to be able to achieve this.

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