Goal Setting

Goals and Motivation: Turning What You Want Into a Clear Goal

This goal setting worksheet helps you turn something you want into a clear goal, a plan of small steps, and a simple way to track your progress. It is based on goal-setting theory from psychologists Edwin Locke and Gary Latham, who studied goals for more than 35 years. Their research found that clear, challenging goals usually lead to better results than vague goals like "do your best."

1 Choose your goal

Pick one goal that matters to you right now. It can be about your health, work, money, relationships, learning, or anything else.

What I want:

Example: I want to feel fitter.

My goal, written so anyone could tell when it is done:

Example: Walk for 30 minutes on five days a week until the end of March.

Why this goal matters to me:

Why does this work? *Locke and Latham found that goals help in four ways. They point your attention at what matters, give you energy, help you keep going for longer, and lead you to look for better ways to do the task. A clear goal also lets you see how far you have come, which is hard to do with a goal like "get healthier."*

2 Five checks for your goal

Locke and Latham's research points to five things that make a goal work. Check yours against each one, and change the goal if the answer is "not yet."

Check	Ask yourself	Yes or not yet
Clear	Could someone else tell when I have reached it?	
Challenging	Is it hard enough to stretch me, but still possible?	
Committed	Do I care enough to keep going when it gets hard?	
Feedback	How will I know whether I am on track?	
Broken down	If the goal is big or new to me, have I split it into smaller steps?	

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

© 2026 Choosing Therapy, Inc. All rights reserved.

Scan or click here to learn more about setting healthy goals:

Goal Setting

Goals and Motivation: Turning What You Want Into a Clear Goal

3 Build your commitment

How committed am I to this goal right now? If the answer is low, choose a goal that matters more to you, or tell someone who will check in with you.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

not much *fully*

4 Break it into steps

List the smaller goals and steps that lead to your main goal. Give each one a date.

Step	By when	Done
Buy comfortable walking shoes	*Saturday*	

5 Track your progress

Pick one day a week to check in. Write down what you did and what you will change.

Week	What I did	On track?	What I will change
1	*Walked on three days*	*Not yet*	*Walk at lunch on busy days*

Writing it down helps. A review of 138 studies found that checking your progress makes you more likely to reach a goal, and the effect was larger when people recorded their progress.

When you reach your goal, or the date arrives: what helped, and what would you do differently next time?

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

© 2026 Choosing Therapy, Inc. All rights reserved.

Scan or click here to learn more about setting healthy goals: