



Goal Reassessment

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It's typically agreed upon that January 1st is the day when people make some attempt at goal setting. Losing weight, quitting smoking, exercising more, and improving nutrition are the four most common goals "New Year's candidates" tell me they have set for the upcoming year.

Unfortunately, people very often fail to do what they say they will do, or don't strategize well to begin with. As a personal trainer, who often thinks outside the box, I like to target this time of year (one month after the start of the new year) to help my clients reassess their goals. While January is a popular time to *establish* the goal(s), February is a great time to *reassess* an individual's "plan of attack," making sure the action plan is realistic and well planned.

We've all seen what health clubs look like in January- lots of new faces filled with good intentions. Starting a new year for many means setting and resetting goals. January 1st is synonymous with change, yet so few devise a well-designed execution plan. Without a sensible plan, it's simply not realistic to expect appreciable change. You can't just *want* to change. Rather, you need to sit down and map out what it will take to make that change.

A simple starting point is writing down the basic changes required to reach your goals. You need to be *willing* to change but you also have to be ready to modify your current behaviors. Change can be a tough thing as it takes us out of our comfort zone. But taking several "baby steps" can give us a sense of confidence and motivation to continue.

Heck, reaching one's goals can even been tough for celebrities like Oprah Winfrey who's recently confessed to gaining forty pounds in one year. President Obama has had his battles with cigarette smoking.

Here are three basic steps that will help you achieve your goals.

Step 1: Seek Expert Guidance

After you've acknowledged that you are ready to make a change, find experts who can help you. Talk to them about what steps are needed to reach your goals. As personal trainer Erin Weiss-Trainor notes, "Just wanting something isn't enough...it's the process of planning and setting actions in place that shape the behaviors that lead to the changed outcome."

Step 2: Confirm your goals are S.M.A.R.T.

A popular guide to goal setting is the SMART guide. Your goals need to be:

- **Specific** — Instead of "I want to lose weight," your goal might be "I want to lose 10 pounds in 2 months."
- **Measurable** — How will you measure whether you have reached your goal? An example would be "I will weigh myself on the same scale before I dress on Saturday mornings."
- **Attainable** — Is your goal sensible? Is your goal attainable in the time frame you have identified?
- **Realistic** — A woman I encountered recently wanted to compete in an August triathlon, yet hadn't been on a bike in over thirty years. My focus with her- and many others- is to not be afraid of setting conservative goals, maybe even overly conservative goals to initially experience the taste of success. Author Johnny Diaz has stated, "Beginning with small goals or steps usually leads to a bigger payoff later."
- **Timely** — Apply some self-accountability by instituting a deadline to reach your goals. Again, make sure you set mini goals along the way.

Step 3: Document Your Progress

Research shows that people who experience the highest levels of success typically document their progress, whether in writing or on the computer. And indeed, over the years, my clients who've experienced the greatest success have been the ones who've tracked their progress.



Summary Tips

Some advice from my personal experiences:

- Reflect back to a time when you were successful in making a change and mirror the behaviors you engaged in.
- Surround yourself with positive influences. If you feel changing your work out environment will help, find a new place to work out. Hang out with people who are working on similar goals.
- Make it a group effort. Support from others increases the likelihood of success. Use your network.
- Establish a habit.



Paul Connolly is certified through the National Strength and Conditioning Association as a personal trainer and possesses a degree in Exercise Science from UMASS-Boston, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude.