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Proven behaviour change strategies: Goal Setting

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Key references

**Goal setting theory:** Locke et al. *Psychology Bulletin* 1981; 90: 125-152

**Effective techniques in behaviour change interventions:**
- Abraham & Gardner. *Psychology and Health* 2009; 24: 1153-1165

**Goal setting in clinical practice:** Sage et al. *CBT for chronic illness*. Wiley 2008

**Patient experiences of goal setting:** Dures et al. *Arthritis Care & Research* 2012; 64: 494-501
Overview of the session

• Rationale for goal setting
• Support patients to identify priorities
• Support patients to set goals
• Principles and examples of SMART goals
• Providing constructive follow up
• Skills practice
A goal

A clear statement of something that the patient would like to achieve in relation to a problem that they are experiencing
The rationale for goal setting

Addressing a problem identified by the patient

A focus on change is constructive and hopeful

The link with self-efficacy and self-management

The problem-solving skills gained in the goal setting process can be applied to other health behaviours
Supporting patients to identify their priorities

The wheel of life
Helpful questions could include...

Is there something that you would like to try but haven’t felt able to do?

What would you like to be different?

Is there something you would like to do more of? Or less of?

What would you like to happen that is not happening now?
Supporting patients to set goals

1. What is your starting point?
2. What would you like to achieve?
3. What do you need to do for this to happen?
4. Break down bigger, long term goals into smaller, short term goals (action plans)
Principles of SMART goals

**S**pecific (What are you going to do?)
**M**easurable (How much? How often?)
**A**chievable (Is it within your control?)
**R**ealistic (How confident are you?)
**T**ime-based (When will you do it?)

Be precise!
Examples of un-SMART goals

Have help with the housework
Work less, rest more
Get fit
Lose 10 lbs before Christmas
Improve social life
Rejoin the rugby team
Supporting patients with action plans

To swim regularly

Wk 1: Buy swim wear next weekend
Wk 2: Phone up on Monday to find out opening times and prices of swimming pool
Wk 3: Find out bus times and routes, and plan journey to the pool
Wk 4: Swim for 15 minutes on Wednesday morning
Wk 5: Swim for 15 minutes on Wednesday morning and Friday morning
Principles of SMART goals: Identify facilitators and barriers

How important is this to you?
0 ------------------------------------------------- 10

How confident are you that you can do this?
0 ------------------------------------------------- 10

What could you do to increase your confidence?

Try for 7 and above
Activity action plan towards my goal: Week 1

This week I will ...........................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................
How much/how often?...........................................................................................................
When? ....................................................................................................................................
Confidence rating? (0-10) ........
Record of what happened ......................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................................

Pain Management Service, North Bristol NHS Trust, Bristol, UK
Constructive follow up: What if the goal isn’t achieved?

Don’t judge or frame it as failure.

Look for any positives (e.g. partial attainment).

Explore what happened and why:
   Was the task too complex?
   Was a step missed out?
   What is something beyond their control?
   Was there a lack of motivation?

Focus on getting back on track.
Skills practice: Ruth’s fatigue

A high achieving, career minded woman
Long, busy week days with no breaks; and
weekends too tired to do much

She wants support to pace and plan

1. Identify a long term goal
2. Break it down and identify short term goals (action plans) to get there
3. Check they meet SMART criteria
4. Rate confidence and importance
Ruth’s goal and plan to get there

An example:
Skills practice: Sandra’s fatigue

Sleeping a lot during the day, and having late nights

She wants support to improve her sleep pattern and re-engage in daily activities

1. Identify a long term goal
2. Break it down and identify short term goals (action plans) to get there
3. Check they meet SMART criteria
4. Rate confidence and importance
Sandra’s goal and plan to get there

An example:
Characteristics of helpful goals

Identified by the patient

Acceptable to patient, and within the scope of what they can influence and change

The potential to be a ‘quick win’

An opportunity to learn something that might have wider relevance for the patient

Sage et al. (2008)
The patient perspective

We own our own plans and they’ve not been foisted on us

We’re all totally different people with different lifestyles and so you try to reach those goals within your own lifestyle and I knew where mine differed and I knew where mine need to go

Dures et al. 2012
Conclusions

• Goal setting can be constructive and positive

• Goals should be SMART

• Check importance and confidence using a rating scale

• Write down goals (patient and professional)

• Follow up on goals

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