

Resilience in the Making:

Goal Setting

Welcome everyone! My name is Renee Dell'Acqua and I'm a Senior Health Educator in Health Promotion Services here at UC San Diego.

On this episode of Live Well Be Well, I'll be discussing the ins and outs of goal-setting!

So I hope you get inspired, I hope you feel connected, and I hope you discover new ways to live your best life. Let's get started!

Recently, the beaches around San Diego County opened up for the purposes of physical activity, which is amazing seeing as both physical activity and being out in nature are good for our bodies, minds, hearts, and souls. So I had the thought, "beaches are open, I need to get some fresh air, and I need to move my body so what better time than now is it to get back into running," which is exactly what I did. But the challenge here was that it's been quite some time since I ran consistently so I basically had to start from square one, which was extremely daunting at first. Luckily for me, I'm fortunate enough to have an amazing running coach who happens to be my dad! He's been running since he was a teenager and is an avid trail and marathon runner so when he gives advice, particularly about running, I listen!

So let's set the stage of what went down and then we'll talk about how this pertains to goal setting specifically. So my dad and I get to the beach and before we begin, we do some stretching and talk about what our goals are. My dad points ahead and says, "see those rocks wayyyy out there? That's where we're going. But we're not going to put all our focus on that just yet. Do you see those lifeguard towers along the way? Our goal is to reach each one of them until we get to the end." So that was our breakdown of our 6-mile journey.

We started off slow to get our muscle moving and our bodies warmed up. We picked up our pace just a bit but not to the point that we were over-exerting ourselves.

Along the way my dad gives me pointers about the spacing of my strides, the movement of my arms, how to maintain a calm and steady breath, and the importance of not getting caught up in reaching the end-goal because that was ways away, but keeping my focus on achieving my mini-goals of reaching the lifeguard towers and paying attention to what I'm doing in the present moment. He also reminded me that I'm surrounded by nature's beauty so when my mind tells me I need to give up or that I'm not strong enough to keep going, or when my body starts experiencing those notorious aches and pains, I need to re-direct my attention on the beauty surrounding me – I need to listen to the sound of crashing waves, see the seagulls flying above me and the stones and sea shells just below my feet, and to feel the crisp and salty breeze come across my body.

Well we reach out first lifeguard tower, then our second, then our third, and so on. And each time we reached our mini-milestone, my dad tells me, "look behind you and see how far we've come. Now look ahead and see our next lifeguard tower as well as our final destination: the stone pile." Before we move on to our next lifeguard tower, we give each other our usual, celebratory fist bump and we take a quick breather by walking and stretching, we don't fully stop or sit down because we want to keep our momentum going so we keep moving even if it's at a snail's pace. And when we're ready, we pick up our pace and proceed ahead.

Finally, we reach our ultimate destination: the stone pile that was once "wayyyy other there," is not right in front of me. And oh my goodness if only I can express the sense of relief, achievement, and pride I felt. It was the most amazing and rewarding feeling. Once we climb the stone pile, we take in the view, we snap a few photos to send to my mom, we take a quick breather, and we make our way back. As we work our way back, I utilize all the tips, tricks, and knowledge I gained on the way over to get me back home. And even though I was exhausted, all that experience and wisdom helped me get back to where I needed to go.

So while I didn't explicitly say this, this anecdote lays the framework for SMART goals. The SMART in SMART Goals stands for SPECIFIC, MEASUREABLE,

ATTAINABLE, RELEVANT, and TIME-BASED goals. These are the types of goals we must aim to develop because it increases our likelihood of achieving our desired outcomes.

Let's go through each component of SMART goals and discuss how my running example fits this model to give you a better understanding of what each component means and how you can implement it.

#1: SPECIFIC: It's important to breakdown your goal into specific steps because this will lay the groundwork for what you're aiming to achieving. If you only establish your long-term goal without guidance for how you're get there that can make things seem daunting and feel like it's not an achievable goal. This is also a great time to think about alternative routes and plan Bs and Cs for if and when you're met with unforeseen challenges and setbacks. For me, I had the specific goal of running on the beach, for a total of 6-miles roundtrip, with each lifeguard tower being my mini-goal and the large stone pile being my ultimate end goal.

#2: MEASURABLE: Determine how you're going to measure whether you're progressing in the right direction towards achieving your goals. And remember, with each mini victory, celebrate. Celebrate how far you've come! With each setback, take note of what might of went wrong and learn how to adjust your path accordingly. One of the biggest pieces of advice I always offer is that each failure and mistake provides you with learning lessons, and those lessons take you one step closer to your goal, if you allow it to do so. So for my running goal, it was measureable in that I knew that I had a specific distance I wanted to run, which was 6 miles total.

#3: ATTAINABLE: It's important that we be realistic in our goal pursuits by ensuring that we have the resources, support, and positive and encouraging mindset to guide us to where you want to go. My goal was attainable for several reasons. First, I had prior history of running so I knew that I could do it based on past experience. Second, I had my dad's support to keep me going and to give me guidance along the way. Third, I had it in the back of my mind that if I couldn't

reach the full 6 miles even after putting in my best effort, I knew that I tried my best and there was always tomorrow and the day after that and the day after that to ultimately achieve my goal.

#4: RELEVANT: It's critical that our goals align with our values and motivations because when times get tough and you experience obstacles along in your journey, which we all do, you'll remember why these goal are worth fighting for. My goal aligned nicely with my personal goals of moving my body daily, challenging and strengthening my capabilities and endurance, and being out in nature, especially after being indoors for several weeks. So when my body and mind felt like giving up, I knew what I was fighting for.

#5: TIME-BASED: Although I didn't tell myself I needed to run these 6 miles in a specific timeframe, as I wanted to listen to my body and the rhythm it could maintain, I knew that I wanted to get home before sunset so for this instance, that was how I kept my goal structured in time. So with your own goals, keep a timeframe or deadline of when you want to achieve your goals – whether that be a few days, months, or a year from now.

So that's the structure of SMART goals. And with this structure, there are other important factors and advice to consider. When we're setting goals one of the biggest factors that can affect our success is how much we believe in ourselves. We have to believe that we can. We need to give ourselves a pep talk, we need to see how far we've come and know that we have the strength and capability to keep pushing forward. Second, While you're advancing in your journey, celebrate your victories, big and small. Each time I reached my mini-milestone of a lifeguard tower I said to myself, "Wow, look at me! I got this!" And that gave me that extra morale boost to get me to each subsequent mini-milestone until I reached my ultimate goal. So that's what you need to do for yourself! Celebrate each and every achievement during your goal pursuit. In addition, tap into your social support systems, ask for help – there is no shame in that! We are all human, we all experience challenges, and we all need help from time to

time. So if there are people who can provide you support and guidance, reach out to them.

And lastly, don't lose sight of your end goal, but at the same time live in the present moment, enjoying and learning with each step you take in your journey.

With all that, when you reach your finish line, celebrate your hard work, your perseverance, your mini-successes and failures, and your strengths and capabilities because all of that led you to where you wanted to go. And you'll realize that you endured a lot in that journey. For me it was muscle aches, feeling winded, questioning your strengths and capabilities. But we have the strength to power through the challenges and inconveniences we face and we make it happen. And once we've succeeded we've equipped ourselves with so much knowledge, experience, and wisdom to help us along in our next goal pursuit.

So that concludes this episode of Live Well, Be Well! If you like what you heard today and would like to learn more about topics related to health and wellness, there's much more to come!

Please be sure to check out our website healthpromotionservices.ucsd.edu and also follow us on Instagram and Facebook under @ucsdhps. Stay tuned for our next episode of Live Well, Be Well.

Until next time, be kind, be true, be you. And remember, to be well is to live well.