

# HOW-TO GUIDE:

## EFFECTIVE GOAL SETTING

Despite the time and effort put into goal setting, it very often fails to be effective. Goal setting in a school setting requires a few preconditions to be effective:

- that students are motivated to set goals (this requires a sense of agency and self-efficacy and a level of intrinsic motivation)
- that teachers invest the time and effort authentically to support effective goal setting and not just 'go through the ropes'; and,
- that this is a process that is cyclically repeated and built upon.

The value and benefits of goal setting may need to be acquired by students. And many young people need support to build self-efficacy, goal setting skills and develop a sense of purpose in their schooling.

### Some things to consider when developing a goal setting process:

- There is limited research support for **SMART goals** in school settings. SMART goals were developed in relation to motivated (either extrinsically or intrinsically) adult workers and work well with people with passion, purpose and cognitive and emotional maturity.
- Goals are only effective in as much as the person is committed to them (i.e. that they find them meaningful.) When asked what you want to do, particularly in an area that you are not highly invested in, people will often sprout the 'shoulds' they have been told. The things we think we 'should' do carry little impact as a goal if they are merely cognitive, not emotional.
- **Emotional Brain goals** are goals that align with our values, lives and past experiences. These are goals that emotionally grip us and invite an emotional reaction if not accomplished. **Smart Brain goals** can be reframed as Emotional Brain goals when we relate our should to things that really matter to us.
- **Performance oriented goals** are focused on the achievement of an aim, or the avoidance of failure. These types of goals can be associated with comparison with others, a fixed mindset, reduction in student effort (as they associate effort as a sign of low ability) and self-handicapping behaviours. In contrast, process-oriented goals are those that focus on effort or tasks completed in order to achieve learning or mastery. Process-oriented goals are associated with a growth mindset, seeking out challenges, persistence in learning, and increased academic performance. Performance orientated goals can be effective for highly motivated students seeking university entrance or similar.
- In any goal setting process it is important that it follow a cyclic pattern of: design, evaluation of progress (including seeking feedback), completion and evaluation, new design... etc. it's very important that people are realistic in understanding their starting point and select goals that are challenging but achievable. If goals are set without mid-progress evaluation or post goal reflection they fail to effectively create positive change.
- Typically, people overestimate what they can do in a day. Try cutting goals in half or chunking them down to develop a very clear set of **Next Steps**. If people aspire too high and far from the starting point, the goal can become intimidating and result in a loss of interest. Small successes build a sense of accomplishment, internal locus of control and self-efficacy. Small successes also allow us to change the trajectory of goals as we get closer and more experienced in the field.
- Many young people have not had a chance to develop their goal setting processes or the maturity and commitment to education. They are often not ready to pursue individual goals. Team goals or structured goal setting by an external party works equally well if the 'why' and 'relevance' is well explained.
- Goal setting is most productive when everyone is calm and focused on the task at hand. While it can be an effective tool to use as part of a debriefing after an incident to determine alternate behaviours/strategies for the future, this should only occur after the young person has had enough time to de-escalate and is open to further discussion and change (See [Feeding the Wild Brain how-to guide](#)).

## 3 levels of goal setting

Each student has a different level of emotional and cognitive maturity and this impacts on their capacity to appreciate and set goals. Having students set individual goals that they are unable to maintain enthusiasm, self-regulation and focus on may destroy confidence and self-efficacy. In Reboot we recommend a 3-level goal setting process that meets students where they are at emotionally and cognitively, while building their capacity to appreciate goal setting and fostering their goal setting skills. All 3 levels outlined below use the same goal setting templates below. Each of the 3 levels below builds on the one before:

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### Team or class-wide goals

Using the Positive Change Highway goal setting templates included to introduce the concept of goal setting and its benefits to the entire class as a whole. Explain each of the steps within the process and use the template to set class goals for a learning module, lesson, specific activity or event (sports days, concerts etc.) or as a quick morning activity. Check-in mid-goal and debrief at the end of the period with discussion about the benefits of having a clear focus and intention (the goal), expectation of troubles on the way (building resilience) and use of strategies to address any Speedbumps or Roadblocks encountered.

Delivering this as a whole class helps build an understanding of the process of goal setting and accomplishment, and a value for it. Goals can be decided by individuals or the class as a whole. This supports goal setting for children and young people who have yet to develop the emotional or cognitive maturity to hold onto individual goals, and builds a sense of self-efficacy, team work and confidence.

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### 1-for-1-for-1

For individuals who have greater emotional and cognitive maturity a guided process of school-based goal setting is the 1-for-1-for-1 method. Use the below templates and identify 1 subject area that the student would like to achieve 1 grade improvement in over 1 term. Focusing on one subject area helps build self-efficacy and confidence. Students may initially require assistance to sound out their goals and plan. 1-for-1-for-1 can be extended to 2-for-1-for-1 etc.

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### Individual goal setting

Use the included templates with individuals who have the motivation and emotional and cognitive maturity to desire and commit to individual goals. Students may initially require assistance to sound out their goals and plan. Goals may include 1-for-1-for-1 approaches.

# Positive Change Highway goal setting templates

Students need to experience the process and value of goal setting. This can only happen with adults who authentically believe in the process and allocate sufficient time and energy to create a positive goal setting experience. The 3 templates below help with Goal Setting, Mid-progress Check-ins and Post-goal Debrief. Each template has questions accompanying each step that can be delivered as a whole class discussion or with individuals. Key in the process are the following steps:

	<p><b>Know your starting point:</b> its hard to move forward and set effective goals if you are not realistic about where you are currently at. It's important to identify it clearly and take OWNERSHIP of the situation you are in.</p>
	<p><b>Honest Reflection:</b> knowing clearly which Quadrant you are in helps to identify the steps needed next.</p>
	<p><b>Clarity around the goal:</b> exactly what are you trying to achieve/change. Be very specific, measurable (if possible) and positive. It's very hard to commit or achieve a goal if it remains nebulous or undefined. Use <b>Motivational Interviewing</b> (MI) to identify any counter-intentions or unconscious sabotage. Asking people to 'act out' their goals physically is a good indicator of levels of commitment also. If things don't feel right or the MI picks up a lack of real commitment go back and create a goal the individual is truly committed to achieving.</p>
	<p>Chunk goals into the <b>Next Steps</b>. This might include things that you are going to start doing, stop doing or keep doing to achieve the bigger goal. Planning and achieving smaller pieces helps build self-efficacy, an internal locus of control and confidence.</p>
	<p><b>Speedbumps</b> are 100% inevitable!!! Understanding this and being prepared for the most likely Speedbumps helps build resilience, problem-solving skills and prepares us to more easily achieve our goals. Speedbumps are things that slow you down. One person's Speedbumps might be another's Roadblocks.</p>
	<p><b>Roadblocks</b> are also inevitable! It's very helpful to consider what Roadblocks might come up when trying to achieve your goals and what steps or strategies you can prepare to address them. Roadblocks are things that will stop you in your path and may require new goals or a detour.</p>
	<p><b>The Cycle of Despair</b> arises when an individual has given up hope of achieving their goal/s. Each time we cycle back into a state of being Disheartened we confirm for ourselves that we just can't do it and loose any or more confidence to make change. People with an external locus of control and low self-efficacy find it hard to believe that they can break out of this Cycle of Despair.</p>
	<p><b>Strategies</b> are the tools and plans we use to address problems and move further toward our aims. We often unconsciously apply habitual problem-solving tools throughout a day. It's helpful to be more conscious and select the best strategies for a problem at hand. Preparing these in advance (which may include preparing resources or help) has them at the ready.</p>
<p><b>Check-in Date</b></p>	<p>Set the <b>check-in date</b> in advance to review progress and strategise any changes that might be required to make it to a goal successfully.</p>

# 1. SETTING GOALS

	<p><b>Where are you now?</b> (reflection on past goal setting and/or current state)</p> <p>How do you feel about it?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
	<p>Which <b>Zone</b> are you in regarding this goal?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
	<p><b>What's the goal?</b> Why does it matter to you? How would it feel if you achieved it?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
	<p>What are your <b>Next Steps</b> ×3 to make this happen? (What are you going to start doing, stop doing or keep doing?)</p> <p>i) _____</p> <p>ii) _____</p> <p>iii) _____</p>
	<p>What <b>Speedbumps</b> are you expecting?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
	<p>What <b>Roadblocks</b> are you expecting?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
	<p>Have you <b>given up</b>? Do you think you might never reach this goal?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
	<p>What <b>Strategies</b> can you use?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Check-in Date</b></p>	<p>Next check-in date: _____</p>

## 2. CHECKING-IN ON GOAL PROGRESS

	<p>What's your goal?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>Which <b>Zone</b> are you in regarding this goal?</p> <hr/>
	<p>What <b>Next Steps</b> have you completed and are you up to?</p> <p>i) _____</p> <p>ii) _____</p> <p>What <b>Next Steps</b> are you up to?</p> <p>i) _____</p>
	<p>What <b>Speedbumps</b> have you encountered or are you experiencing?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>What <b>Roadblocks</b> have you encountered or are you experiencing?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>Have you <b>given up</b>? Do you think you might never reach this goal?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>What <b>Strategies</b> have you used so far?</p> <hr/> <p>Do you need to find a new strategy to get moving again?</p> <hr/>
<p><b>Check-in Date</b></p>	<p>Next check-in date: _____</p>

### 3. POST-GOAL DEBRIEF

	<p><b>What was your goal?</b> Have you achieved it?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>Which <b>Zone</b> are you in regarding this goal?</p> <hr/>
	<p>What <b>Next Steps</b> did you successfully complete?</p> <p>i) _____</p> <p>ii) _____</p> <p>iii) _____</p>
	<p>What <b>Speedbumps</b> did you encounter? What strategies did you use to overcome them?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>What <b>Roadblocks</b> have you encountered? What strategies did you use to overcome them?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>Did you <b>give up</b> at any point? What did you do to get back on track?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>What <b>Strategies</b> did you use? Any new ones you have discovered?</p> <hr/>
	<p><b>Where are you at now?</b></p> <hr/>
	<p><b>What's your next goal?</b></p> <hr/>