



## **Achieving My Goals**

The first step in achieving your goals is to have clear, specific, achievable goals. Read “Identifying and Setting Goals” if you have not already done so. The next step is to keep your goals in mind as you face the multitude of choices that come your way. Life moves so quickly, especially for college students, that many opportunities may be lost if you are unclear about your goals.

Achieving your goals is a wonderful feeling. Have you noticed that you become more self-confident when you reach goals you set for yourself? Research shows that people feel better about themselves and are happier with their lives when they set goals and achieve them.

Once you have a clear set of goals, break them down into manageable steps and gather the resources you need to achieve them. As you work toward your goals, here are some tips:

**1. Avoid the “quantum leap” approach.**

A person who is overweight may want to be thin, but it is important to celebrate the small signs of success along the way. What are the steps toward your goals? How will you reward yourself for achieving each of these steps?

**2. Identify the pitfalls and barriers.**

Imagine going through your usual routine on a typical day. What choices could you make that would take you closer to your goals? Do you often encounter barriers or pitfalls that prevent you from progressing toward your goals? For example, a person on a diet might notice that one friend often offers tempting treats. Can you think of ways to avoid the pitfalls and get around the barriers?

**3. Prioritize your goals.**

If you have more than one goal, it is important to prioritize them. For example, both friendships and academic achievement might be on your list of goals. Although the best option may be to give some time to each, you may be forced to choose between two goals at a particular point in time. Prioritizing your goals in advance makes it easier to make a quick decision when faced with a choice. For additional help with this, read “Setting Priorities”.

**4. Reevaluate your priorities regularly.**

It is possible that you have successfully given priority to one of your goals for some time, and you may need to give priority to a different goal for a while. After staying focused on one set of priorities for a week or so, it is helpful to evaluate your priorities to make sure that none of them are being neglected.

**5. Celebrate your successes.**

For each goal, list the signs of progress. Even small steps toward a goal are valuable. Be sure to take credit for the progress you have made and take time to feel good about it. If you start to feel discouraged with the distance to your goals, remind yourself of the progress you have made.

**6. Recognize unconscious goals.**

Think about the choices you have made that did not serve the goals on your list. Do you have other goals that you forgot to list? Did you make some choices that were destructive or a waste of time? If the choices were counterproductive, you may need help understanding why you made such choices. This is a good issue to discuss with a counselor.

**7. Evaluate the value of activities.**

How successful are your activities in satisfying your goals? Have any of your activities been less effective than you had expected? Are there other activities that would make better use of your time? For example, you might belong to a study group that gets distracted easily and wastes a lot of time chatting. Can you explain your concerns to the group? Can you help the group to stay on task? If not, you may need to drop out of the group.

**8. Notice lack of progress.**

Is there a goal toward which you are not making progress? Is the goal unrealistic? Is the lack of progress due to a lack of commitment? What choices would you need to make in order to make progress toward this goal? What prevents you from making these choices? Some goals may need to be restated in a way that makes them more achievable.

**9. Revise completed goals.**

Are there goals that have already been accomplished? Do you need to rewrite a goal at a higher level? If you are making good progress on a goal, it may be time to revise it upward, and set your sights higher. If you have effectively made good decisions, you may want to think about how to maximize your success. Are there steps you could take to be even more successful?

If you need additional help with achieving your goals, talk to an advisor or counselor.