

## Tips for Parents: Setting Goals

***How often do your children begin new projects that they never complete? If this seems to be happening a lot, it may be time to give your kids some help in learning to set goals.***

### **How to set effective goals**

**Start off by teaching how to set short-term goals.** Explain to your kids that goals do not have to involve long, complicated tasks. Some examples of short-term goals are:

- Exercise by going roller skating for 30 minutes
- Reading a chapter from a favorite book
- Make 5 rebounds during the next basketball game
- Learn the meaning and spelling of a new word (daily/weekly)

Allow your kids to choose their own short-term goals and provide plenty of praise once those goals are met.

**Your next step will be teaching how to set long-term goals.** For example:

- Getting exercise by roller skating could become a once, twice, or even three times a week activity with a long-term goal of becoming physically fit
- Reading a book (for fun) each week
- Playing at least a few minutes in each district basketball game
- Saving part of a weekly allowance with the long-term goal of buying something special in the future

### **Abstract versus concrete goals**

As your children learn to set short and long term goals, you may need to teach them about the difference between abstract and concrete goals. “Doing better in school” is an example of one abstract goal that your child might choose. Although doing better in school is what we all may want, exactly how to achieve it might be unclear. Help turn this abstract goal into something more concrete by suggesting that a way to do better in school might be to make a “B” on the next math test. “Helping out more at home” is another abstract goal that your child can turn into a concrete goal by taking the trash out every week.

## **Tools Not Rules**

Make it clear to your kids that goals are not “set in stone”. It’s okay to drop or change a goal. Goals should be tools to help you in life, not rules that restrict you.

## **Tips for helping your child set goals:**

- Try stating the goal in writing. (Is it a short-term or long-term goal?) e.g., “I will learn a new word every day.”
- Set a time frame to accomplish the goal, e.g., “I will learn seven words in a week.”
- Help your child visualize accomplishing his/her goal.
- When the time frame has passed, help your child determine if he or she has reached the goal.
- Talk about and recognize which efforts did or did not work. (We learn from our mistakes.)

## **Why teach goal setting?**

Goal setting helps kids learn from their failures, and increases the likelihood of task completion and the probability of student success.

## **Goal setting and self-esteem**

Being able to set and accomplish goals gives student control over the way they change and grow. This allows them to feel confident about taking care of themselves and contributing to their surroundings in a positive way. By knowing that they can take care of the basic tasks that daily life requires they will gain the confidence to face the unexpected challenges.

For more information, see:

### **Books for Kids:**

Youngs, Bettie and Youngs, Jennifer. “A Taste-Berry Teen’s Guide to Setting and Achieving Goals.” HCI Teens, 2002.

Bishop, John. “Goal Setting for Students.” Accent On Success, 2003.

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