



# GOAL SETTING IN A YEAR OF UNCERTAINTY

The start of a new year usually means setting new goals and laying out fresh plans. But of course this year we need to adapt our ambitions to the reality of COVID-19. If you're feeling unsure about where to start amid the uncertainty of the pandemic, these tips from clinical psychologist and University of Calgary professor Dr. Keith Dobson could put you on the path to success.

## 1 Focus on the short term

While the long-awaited vaccine is a welcome light at the end of the tunnel, life won't be returning to the way it was overnight. So, for now, focus on short-term goals such as exercising a set number of times per week or completing a short online course. Remember, just because a goal can be achieved quickly doesn't mean it has less value. Accomplishing anything you've committed to helps to build self-esteem and promote mental well-being.

## 3 Balance pleasure with purpose

Goals related to activities that bring you joy are equally important to those based on achieving success. Committing to a hobby or to social connections can be just as fulfilling as dedicating yourself to material success or a sense of purpose. By balancing the types of goals you set, you'll be more likely to enjoy the journey rather than focus solely on the outcome.

## 5 Give yourself grace

It's important that you allow yourself to set modest goals and be gracious with yourself if you come up short – particularly now, when the pandemic has left so many of us feeling mentally and physically fatigued. Just like a goal like taking a shower each day is perfectly OK, there's nothing to be ashamed of if you don't quite achieve that financial goal. Setting goals is about working toward self-improvement, and that effort is what matters most.

## 2 Leave room for the long term

You can also look further ahead while focusing on the near future. Goal setting is an expression of hope, and fostering optimism for the long term may help you get through some current challenges. This year, since the pandemic may require us all to adjust our timelines, try to avoid firm deadlines as you set long-term goals. One example could be taking on a volunteer opportunity when public health measures allow.

## 4 Align goals with personal values

Set aside some time to think about your personal values and try to ensure that your goals reflect them. Aligning your aspirations with your value system can add meaning in a way that arbitrary achievements cannot. For example, if good health is one of your top values, crafting goals aimed at improving your physical condition will be far more rewarding than simply pursuing a promotion at work.

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