

Depression and Goal Setting

Goal setting can help sad and depressed persons initiate formulate an action plan which in turn increases self-confidence. Depression and chronic sadness can erode one's self-esteem and make it difficult to complete even simple tasks. Set goals every day and start small if necessary. It's important to take one day at a time. If you are not able to meet your goal today, commit to completing the goal tomorrow. If accomplishing even the smallest goal seems impossible, consider contacting a mental health professional who can help walk you through the process.

When setting goals, it is best if they:

- Are specific
- Are detailed
- Target problems
- Are attainable
- Provide solutions

★ Make a list of three problems that you would like to address. Be specific. An example would be: *I don't know what to say or do in social situations. I am very uncomfortable being with other people.*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

★ Choose one of the problems and make a list of short-term and long-term goals that can provide solutions for that particular problem. An appropriate short-term goal for the example listed above is: *I will initiate social contact at least once per week.* A long-term goal could be: *I will work toward being more social confident at the office Christmas party next year.* Consider your short-term goals part of the plan to accomplish long-term goals.

Short-term:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Long-term:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

★ Define in behavioral terms any important terms in your goals. Examples: *Definition of "social contact": A conversation or interaction with another person. Definition of "socially confident": Less anxiety when involved in a conversation or interaction with others.*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

★ Decide how you will determine the goal has been met. Example: *Means of determining that you have less anxiety when interacting with others - Possible answer: Rate level of anxiety from 1 to 10 with daily social exchanges. Keep a daily journal detailing social situations and*

giving anxiety rating for each. Journaling may also help you determine your progress and which types of social encounters may increase anxiety.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

★ Take one of your short-term goals and break it down into actions that are manageable for you. The first chart gives an example based on the sample problem. Use the blank chart for one of your goals.

Short-term Goal: I will initiate contact at least once per week with a supportive person.
Actions:
1. Decide with whom you want to initiate contact. (John, a person I met at church)
2. Decide where the contact will take place. (<u>Brief</u> phone call asking about the Saturday church supper)
3. Prepare for contact. (Look up number in phone book, rehearse what you will say, use positive self-talk)
4. Make contact. (Call John.)
5. Evaluate the implementation of the contact. (Journal or make a list of the positive aspects of the contact and those that you would change next time.)
6. Write out or chart any unhealthy self-talk that took place during the implementation of your plan. Rewrite as healthy, rational thoughts. (See <i>Changing Self Talk</i> .)

Short-term Goals
Actions:
1.

2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

★ Now do the same with one of your long-term goals.

Long-term Goals
<i>Actions:</i>
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.

Try to work toward at least one goal each day. If you have difficulty achieving a goal, break it down into smaller, more manageable actions or parts. You don't have to work on all your goals at once. While focusing on your short-term goals, keep your long-term goals in mind.