**Achieve More in Life and Feel Good About the Results**

We tend to overestimate what we can accomplish in the short-term and underestimate what we can accomplish in the long-term. The frustration that results is one big reason why so many New Year’s resolutions die before Spring.

But if you use these key strategies that are supported by deeply-held values – and science! – you’ll set better goals, achieve them, and feel better about yourself while doing so.

**Know your values.**

Knowing your values can provide real clarity on what you want to achieve in your life.

So ask yourself, what’s important to you? What makes you excited to get up in the morning? What are the passions and interests that fill your time when you’re not working? Who are the people you do those things with?

Another way to explore your values is to try new things. For example, volunteering at your local church or community center might reveal a passion for teaching or philanthropy that you never knew you had. These active experiments can become even more important as you age and start thinking about how you’ll stay happy and engaged in retirement.

**Align your goals with your values.**

Behavioral scientists have found that achieving goals is rarely a matter of ability or knowledge. For example, a person who wants to lose weight knows that eating ice cream with hot fudge five nights a week is not compatible with weight loss. Yet, the reason they keep downing that ice cream is often due to a lack of motivation. They might feel the immediate pleasure from the ice cream outweighs (no pun intended) the longer-term result of no weight loss, or worse, weight gain.

The more important a goal is to us, the more motivated we are to achieve it. Asking “Why?” can help you align your goals with your values and increase that motivational component:

* *Why should you stop eating ice cream five nights a week?* Because I want to be healthier.
* *Why do you want to be healthier?* So that I can live a longer and more active life.
* *Why do you want to live longer and be more active?* So that I can do more things with my children and grandchildren.

Now we’ve identified core values – health and family – that are tied to the goal. These values will make the goal more important, and more likely to be reached.

**Develop an action plan**.

Asking “Why?” helps us move our goal-setting to a higher, value-driven space.

Asking “How?” helps us drill down into specific actions we can take to achieve those goals.

“I want to lose weight” is the sort of goal many people set and then abandon. That’s because it’s too unspecific. You can’t just “lose weight” every day until you hit your desired number.

So, ask yourself, “How am I going to lose weight?” An answer like, “I’m going to exercise more” is closer, but still not actionable enough.

So how are you going to exercise more? Take a bike ride through your neighborhood every morning? Jog for 30 minutes after work three days every week?

Those are small but solid steps that you can use to develop an action plan. You might even go a little further and join a gym, start a neighborhood walk group, or hire a coach to add an extra layer of accountability and keep you on track. And yes, cut out the ice cream and hot fudge!

**Measuring is Motivating.**

Whatever goal you set, try to keep score. It could be as simple as pulling out a piece of blank paper and putting a checkmark on it for each day you don’t eat ice cream. We find that the act of keeping score creates its own momentum and can be like a “pat on the back” for a job well done.

**Be resilient.**

Even a perfectly-set, highly-motivated goal will be challenging. Some lazy Saturday you’ll snooze past your workout. You’ll cheat on your diet. An unexpected home repair might throw off your budgeting goals for the month. But that’s ok! We’re all human. Roll with it that day but then get right back to your plan.

All goals and personal improvements require effort. The grit we need to get over those inevitable humps is its own kind of skill that you can cultivate. Try to push yourself above and beyond your smaller targets. Welcome and accept feedback and criticism that can make you perform better. Prepare yourself to do better tomorrow when your alarm goes off.

And most importantly, stay positive. If your goals truly are aligned with your values, then working towards them shouldn’t feel like punishment. When you experience setbacks, try to embrace them as learning opportunities and adjust your action plan accordingly. And here’s an important piece of advice--when you hit small milestones on your way to big goals, treat yourself. We can all use a little positive reinforcement.

**We’re here to help you.**

What you aspire to achieve may require a financial commitment. Please contact us and we can discuss your particular situation and see how we can help you get on a faster path to achieving your life's aspirations.

*Sources*

[*https://www.belayadvisor.com/behavior/*](https://www.belayadvisor.com/behavior/)

[*https://99u.adobe.com/articles/55219/true-grit-how-to-build-up-your-resilience*](https://99u.adobe.com/articles/55219/true-grit-how-to-build-up-your-resilience)