Setting SMART Goals

Helping patients to set a “SMART” goal and follow through is a key to behavioural change. While not everyone is equally ready to make a change, research shows that even the smallest shift that moves an individual in the right direction is worthwhile, because:

- Goal setting helps people clarify their values, make decisions and monitor their progress.
- Long term goals cannot be reached immediately; they must be broken up into smaller steps.
- Reaching smaller goals improves self-esteem and creates a sense of satisfaction and motivation to continue to move towards a long term goal.

The creation of SMART goals is supported by motivational interviewing. Motivational Interviewing\(^1\) includes:

- Asking open-ended questions
- Affirming successes and expressing empathy
- Listening reflectively
- Summarizing discussions

**SMART Goals** are:

**Specific**

**Measurable**

**Action-Oriented**

**Realistic**

**Time-Limited**

When setting SMART Goals, consider:

**The intention of the goal:** What would your patient like to accomplish in the next few months?

**Specific:** How exactly can your patient go about achieving this goal? What concrete steps would your patient need to take?

**Measurable:** How can your patient measure their progress?

**Action-Oriented:** Is the goal dependent on an action that the patient can take? What will those actions be?

**Realistic:** Is this goal realistic for your patient to achieve?

**Time-Limited:** What timeframe does this goal require? When will your patient start? What is the best time during the week to work on this goal?

Refer to the **Sample Goal Setting Table** for examples of SMART goals in each of the FoH dimensions.
**SAMPLE SMART Goals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intention of Goal</th>
<th>Specific</th>
<th>Measurable</th>
<th>Action-Oriented</th>
<th>Realistic</th>
<th>Time-Limited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What would you like to accomplish in the next few months? (Try using a more general/broad goal)</td>
<td>How specifically can you go about achieving this goal? What concrete steps would you need to take?</td>
<td>How can you measure your progress? How will you know when the goal is achieved? (Can you rate your progress out of 10? How often or for how long will you do the activity?)</td>
<td>Is the goal an action that you can take? What specific actions will you need to take?</td>
<td>Is this goal realistic for you to achieve? Is it doable in the next few weeks or months?</td>
<td>What timeframe does this goal require to achieve? (When will you start/finish? What is the best time in the week?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socially Active:</td>
<td>I can talk to a neighbour for more information or I could sign up on the sheet for the next Seniors Lunch Social in my community.</td>
<td>Seniors Lunch Socials are held once a week at the Seniors Centre, on Thursdays for two hours (11-1) and are ongoing throughout the year.</td>
<td>I need to put it in my calendar to sign up and attend the Seniors Lunch Social.</td>
<td>Yes - I’m free on Thursday from 11-1. The Social takes place at the Seniors Centre, and I can afford the costs associated with it.</td>
<td>I will attend the next four Seniors Lunch Socials over the month of November.</td>
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<tr>
<td>physically Active:</td>
<td>I need to get more exercise</td>
<td>I can go every day in the mornings before 10 am or late afternoon.</td>
<td>I will add a walk 4 mornings a week to my calendar and do it!</td>
<td>Yes – I can go as long as the weather is good and the path/trail is clear.</td>
<td>I will walk 4 mornings a week for one month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change How you Think about Aging</td>
<td>I can make sure I think about the good things in my life and document them. I can get a small notebook at the Dollar Store.</td>
<td>I can write three things I’m grateful for in my life.</td>
<td>Every morning, after I have breakfast, I can write in my notebook.</td>
<td>I have time to do this each day.</td>
<td>I will write 3 things that I’m grateful for in my life each morning for 3 months.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Care of My Mental Health:</td>
<td>I can review my medications with my doctor and we can talk about the best times to take them during the day.</td>
<td>I will take my medications on time each day.</td>
<td>I can put a medication schedule on my fridge and set a reminder alarm on my computer/phone.</td>
<td>I can do this for two weeks to start.</td>
<td>I will take my medications on time each day for two weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn New Things:</td>
<td>I could ask a friend to show me or I could take a cooking class – but I don’t know where. (Together you can phone the local recreation dept. or food coalition to find out about classes.)</td>
<td>Community cooking classes are 3 hours per week, on Wednesdays from 9-12, for six weeks.</td>
<td>I need to put it in my calendar, and attend classes each week for six weeks.</td>
<td>Yes - I am free on Wednesdays, have a car to drive, and can afford the cost.</td>
<td>I will complete 18 hours of the cooking classes within the next two months.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>