

Sport Psychology Newsletter

January, 2002
Volume 6, Issue 5

Goal Setting: Part 2

- 1** Understand that pain and pleasure are the two biggest motivators
- 2** Learn to begin with the end in mind. Where do you want to end up?
- 3** Take action! Motivation by itself is nothing with consistent action
- 4** Learn to schedule priorities, not the other way around.
- 5** Create a support system that will challenge and support you.

Goal Setting 101

Part Two: Setting the Course

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As we begin another new year, many people set resolutions or goals for themselves. The type of goals people set varies as much as the individual, but most people intend on following through with these goals. However, why do many people fail to follow through and see their goals to fruition? The answer may surprise you.

In this second edition of a two-part Sport Psychology Newsletter, we will discuss the art of setting goals that truly inspire you to take action.

Motivators

In our last newsletter, we discussed motivation as being synonymous with passion. Motivation can be defined as an attitude, or a reason for doing something. With this in mind, think about your life and what motivates you. Money? Personal fulfillment? Others? Awards? People are motivated by many different things. But what are the two most influential motivators in everybody's lives? Pain and pleasure.

At the most basic of levels, all human beings are motivated by

two things: the experience of pain and the experience of pleasure. All behaviors can be linked to attempts to either avoid pain or gain pleasure. For instance, let's look at procrastination. What exactly is procrastination? Procrastination can be defined as *putting off the pain of doing something*. In our minds, we make completing the task more painful than not completing it, and as a result, we habitually put off the task. This is an example of the way in which we are programmed as humans to avoid pain (or the perception that something will be painful).

Our minds also seek to pursue pleasure. Activities that we find fun become habits. We seek out people that make us laugh. We eat foods that taste good or are good for our bodies. These are all examples of our human tendency to seek out pleasure (or our perception that something is pleasurable).

So how can we change our behaviors with our new understanding of pain and pleasure? To change any behavior, learn to associate that behavior in your mind as painful. For example, if you are a smoker, think about the physiological effects of tar and nicotine on the body. Imagine how many years your life will be cut short if you continue to smoke. Then, associate pleasure with the cessation of smoking. Visualize how wonderful it will be to be

able to go jogging again without gasping for air. Imagine how fresh your breath will be when you quit smoking. Think about how many years you have saved in your life by quitting this harmful habit.

Therefore, one way to change behaviors quickly and effectively is through utilizing pain and pleasure in a conscious and deliberate manner.

Setting the Course

Now that we have learned the basics of getting started in setting goals and changing our behaviors, let's begin to set the course towards fulfillment of our goals.

Step #1: Begin with the End in Mind

What does beginning with the end in mind mean? It means thinking about where you want to end up and then working backwards. One way to do this is through asking yourself the following questions:

1. Where do I want to be (ideally) in ten years? (financially, physically, emotionally)
2. If I only had ten years to live, what would I want my legacy to be?
3. Why are these things important to me?
4. How can I begin to make them happen?
5. Who can help me do this?

Through asking yourself the "right" questions, you will find that you become more focused, and your energy is directed towards goals in your life that are congruent with your personal values.

Once you have answered these questions, it is important to take action. What good is being motivated if you fail to follow through? Therefore, the first step in taking action is to recruit mentors for each goal you have in your life. Find someone who can assist you along your path to success. Doing this first step will allow you to create the momentum you need to continue.

Next, learn to schedule your priorities. Most people make the mistake of prioritizing their schedules. What happens then is that they get caught up in taking care of less meaningful tasks, such as surfing the internet, reading a book, talking on the phone, etc. These activities can be considered time-wasters. They serve no direct purpose in helping you achieve your goals. It is very important, then, that you learn to schedule ahead of time those things that are most important with regards to achieving your goals.

Staying the Course

After setting goals and beginning to take action towards specific goals in your life, it is important to have fun and stay consistent with your actions. How do you do this? Two simple ways are as follows:

1. Go on auto-pilot. Learn to take care of your

priorities at the beginning of each day. What you will find is that you may complete your daily tasks by noon. What then? Have fun! Relax, knowing that you have taken care of that which is most important in your life.

2. Create and maintain a support system in your life. Seek out friends or acquaintances that will challenge and support you. Evaluate your current "support system": are you surrounding yourself with people that will help you get where you are going? Failing to do so will serve to undermine your momentum and drain valuable energy.

Sport Psychology Services

Jennifer Carter, Ph.D., is the Director of Sport Psychology Services at The Ohio State University. Dr. Sam Maniar and Leif Smith are Sport Psychology Consultants. All three are available to address performance issues or personal concerns with student-athletes. Consultation with coaches, trainers, and physicians is also available. To set up a confidential appointment, please call 293-3600. Jennifer's direct line is 293-2432, Sam can be reached at 293-2440, and Leif can be reached at 598-4539.