

How to Set Value-Based Goals

Values are the core principles that we seek to live out in our lives and our actions are where our values come to life. When we live out our values, we live more authentic lives and experience greater vitality and a deeper connection to ourselves. When we start to struggle with our identity, our roles and responsibilities, or our relationships, it can be because we are also struggling to live out our values.

So how do we start living out our values? By setting value-based goals and achieving them.

Below is a guide to help you start setting value-based goals that will enable you to live out your values.

If you have previously completed the exercise “Am I Living Out My Values?” keep your answer nearby as it will make setting your goals easier.

- 1) Write down one value you want to live out more, the life domain that you would like to live it out in, and how you visualise yourself living it out.

In my life domain of _____, I will be more _____. To be more _____, I need to _____.

For example: In my life domain of *health*, I will be more *self-disciplined*. To be more *self-disciplined*, I need to *set and exercise schedule and stick to it*.

- 2) Set a value-based goal.

SMART goal is a helpful acronym to remember when setting value-based goals. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.

Specific – The goal itself must be very well defined. It cannot be vague, as it makes it too easy to make an excuse to not achieve it. For example, the goal “I will exercise three days a week” is vague and non-specific. The goal “I will exercise Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6am in my garage doing weights for 30 minutes” is an example of a specific goal.

It is helpful to remember the following framework when trying to set a specific goal: After I _____, I will _____.

For example, “After I wake-up Monday morning at 6am, I will go to the garage and do weights for 30 minutes.” This goal is both specific and visualisable.

Measurable – Making our goals measurable allows us to see how successful we have been. This helps us to maintain motivation. Like links in a chain, every time you complete a goal, it adds a link to your chain of success. The longer the chain, the more times you have achieved your goal. Visualising our success in achieving our goals and living out our values can help prevent us from going backwards.

The goal above is an example of a measurable goal because it is possible to look back over every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and see whether a 30-minute weight session was completed or not.

Achievable – Our goals must be realistic if we are going to be able to achieve them. For example, getting up at 6am to do a 30-minute weight routine is unrealistic if we need to drive to work at 6:40am, but very realistic if we need to drive to work at 7am. Setting unachievable goals sets us up for failure.

A useful tool to help make our goals more achievable is to stack them with another habit. For example, let us say you drive home the same route at the same time every night, and your route takes you past a 24-hr gym. Instead of planning to do weights at 6am, you could plan to do them on the way home instead. When we combine a new habit to an existing habit, we increase the likelihood that we will achieve our goals.

When setting an achievable goal, do not be tempted to set a corpse goal. A corpse goal is something you can easily achieve when you are dead. For example, “I will stop watching TV on Monday nights after dinner” is a corpse goal. “After I finish dinner, instead of watching TV, I will read a book” is an example of a living, breathing and achievable goal. This is also a goal that you can prepare for to help you achieve it. For example, before making dinner, you can find the book you want to read and place it on the couch where you are going to read it. Seeing this visual aid makes it more likely that you will achieve your goal.

Relevant – We want to be setting value-based goals, because linking our goals to our values generates motivational fuel for growth and change. For example, the goal “I will exercise Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6am in my garage doing weights for 30 minutes because I want to be healthier” is more likely to succeed because it reminds us of the reason for our goal: the value of health.

Time-Bound – Our goals must be time-bound, otherwise we can make excuses for never starting them. For example, “Starting next Monday, I will exercise Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6am in my garage doing weights for 30 minutes because I want to be healthier” is an example of time-bound value-based SMART goal.

Before you move on to setting you own SMART goals, there are two important principles to remember when setting value-based goals.

- I. **Do not set an emotional goal.** For example, the goal “After I get home, I will take all of the junk food out of my fridge and put it in the bin” is an emotional goal. Emotional goals are not linked to our values, and they often require us to get rid of something or someone. They provide short-term emotional relief but do little to promote meaningful personal growth.
- II. **Do not set an outcome goal.** For example, the goal “I will lose 10 kilos in three months” is an outcome goal. Outcome goals describe the mission objective but not a plan to achieve it. If you find yourself setting an outcome goal, link the outcome to your values and plan some value-based goals that will help you to achieve your desired outcome instead.

Now, try writing a value-based goal using the SMART goal formula for a value that you want to live out more in one of your life domains.

- 3)** Take a moment to reflect on your goal. Is it Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound? Is it linked to a value that you want to live out in your life? Is it a living and breathing goal?

Finally, on a scale of 1-10, how realistically achievable is your goal? If you scored your goal less than 7, you need to rethink your goal. If you scored your goal a 7 or 8, take a moment to reflect on what you could do to make it a 9 or a 10.

Now you can start achieving your value-based goal and living out your values!