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Before you can set goals for your life, you need to know what goals are and how they work. A goal is a result you plan and commit to achieving. There are short-term and long-term goals you can work towards in all areas of your life. Goals can range from personal and health to career and hobby. There are no limits to the type of goals you can include in creating your dream life.

It’s often said that “a goal is a dream with a deadline.” Setting your goals is just as important as the goal itself. Setting yourself up to succeed requires intention and purpose but also realistic expectations. Below are ten helpful tips on how to make your dream life a reality.

1. Reflection - Begin to create a habit of reflecting on your experiences so you can gain important understanding and learning. Reflections also show your repeated patterns in your life that can aid in helping you make better decisions. Take time to reflect on what was most meaningful for you in the past year. Consider your relationships and write down who or what brought you joy or caused you pain.

The answers or insight that come from reflecting on your life will give you direction on where to move forward and how to make your life more meaningful. Reflection can happen before you start your day or even as you get ready for bed at night. By creating a habit or routine that includes reflecting on that day's events you will be able to adjust your goals as needed.

1. Considerations - What really makes you excited? Do you find yourself daydreaming of a new career or health adventure? Write down those thoughts and the feelings that come over you. After you have taken into consideration the things that make you excited, you’ll have created space in your dream goals to make that happen.

There are other things you could consider such as what type of activity fills you with anticipation or what dream makes you motivated to see changes. Your dreams should bring feelings of excitement as you visualize how you will feel at each step while you towards the ultimate result.

1. Personalized - Your goals should be personalized to you and only you. It can be intimidating to share your goals with others especially if they try to influence you into making changes. Your goals are supposed to make you happy by bringing positive change to your life. Choosing goals that are centered on your dream should not be up for debate with others.

If you share your dreams with someone that is not supportive, remember that you do not need their permission. Making positive choices in your life often requires you to have thick skin and a kind heart. Personalizing your dream life is meant to help you make the best decisions possible reach your dreams and goals.

1. Define - If you are struggling with defining your goals start with a broad goal at first. For example, you might want to get healthier. This goal is broad and requires you to define what healthier means to you. Does it mean a specific number on the scale? What action steps will it take for your to reach that goal? Will it involve a balanced eating plan? What type of physical activity will you do on a regular basis. Will you need a personal trainer to help you overcome any obstacles? Be as specific as you can when defining your broad goals as this will help you reach your desired goal.
2. Understand - Do you understand why you want to achieve the goal? Knowing this will not only help you choose goals that are important to you but will help keep you motivated. Knowing your “why” behind the goal is what will keep you moving forward, especially in times of struggle or if self-doubt creeps into your mind. When you take time to define the reason you want to reach a specific goal, you will then automatically create time in your schedule to work towards reaching and accomplishing the desired result.
3. Steps - Breaking down your goals into manageable steps will help you get and stay on track. Actionable steps are essential to reaching larger goals. By breaking down each goal into small steps you are better able to manage your time, resources, and energy. Consider where you are now and where you want to be, so you understand the steps you need to take and in what order.
4. Prioritize - Prioritizing your goals gives your life direction and will help define who you want your future self to be. When you prioritize your goals, you will focus your time and energy on the most important and productive activities. This will then naturally give you a better sense of purpose which will help you manage your time wisely while reducing stress.
5. Milestones - Large goals can often feel like they are unachievable but that is simply not true. If you find that a specific goal is not progressing as quickly as you hoped, try breaking it down into smaller action steps. Be sure to celebrate your accomplishments as you reach each milestone. This will give you the motivation to keep working on your goals.
6. Measurable - For your goals to become a reality you need to use the SMART method.

SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. In this case, SMART is an anacronym using the first letter of each word of the information you will include in this goal setting method.

* Specific: What needs to be accomplished? Who is responsible? What steps need to be taken?
* Measurable: This makes it easy to track the progress and lets you know how close you are to reaching your goal.
* Achievable: Since goals are meant to be realistic to achieve them otherwise you will essentially set yourself up for failure. Be honest with your goal and the steps it will take to achieve the desired outcome.
* Relevant: This is where you ask yourself why you set this goal. As you work through your SMART goals, you may see that a goal is no longer relevant to your dream life. This gives the opportunity to change the goal or remove it.
* Time-bound: Your goals should have a timeline or deadline attached to each one. This will ensure that you begin working towards your goals.

1. Obstacles - Even with the best of plans you could face obstacles when it comes to making your goals a reality. It’s important to recognize the potential obstacles beforehand so you can be better prepared to overcome them. Below are some potential obstacles to look out for may include:

* Negative thinking - Keeping a positive mindset throughout your journey is of utmost importance. When faced with an obstacle your mindset is the one thing that can keep you moving and help you find the necessary help to meet your goal.
* Lack of imagination - You are only limited to your imagination and sometimes stress can cause you to lose that ability. If you run out of ideas on how to achieve your goals, then reach out to a trusted person for ideas.
* Lack of self-confidence - You will need to believe in your ideas and goals to see them completed. Understand that making mistakes or facing setbacks is part of your journey. Keep in mind that every action will bring you towards reaching your goals and this will help build your self-esteem.
* Lack of focus - Focusing on the end goal may be easier if you break the goal down into smaller steps. Be sure to celebrate the milestones along the way to stay focused and see your goal all the way through to the end.
* Time traps - Be sure you have set a realistic timeline for each goal. If you lack setting a deadline you risk the chance of never accomplishing your goal. Refrain from using the word “someday” since this is vague and has no direction. On the other hand, you may be setting your expectations too high or taking on too many goals at the same time.
* Lack of Inspiration - Don’t wait until you “feel” like you are ready to tackle your goal. By waiting until you feel ready you may never get started. Take appropriate actions regardless of how you feel.
* Impatience - Change does not happen overnight and is often slower than most people expect. The solution to this is to remember that every action to take will lead you closer to your goal.
* Fear - Do you have a fear of being successful or reaching your goals? You could self-sabotage before you reach your goal simply out of fear. Fears might include negative thoughts that you are not worthy or fear of having someone take it from you.

If you are faced with any of these or other obstacles, it may be time for you to take a close look at the goals you’re working on and assess whether you are utilizing your time properly. Perhaps creating a dream board or vision board will help you stay focused and avoid or overcome all the obstacles that can happen to you.

**Mindset Is Everything**

When it comes to making life changes, your mindset is going to play the biggest part in making your dreams come true. Shifting your mindset to always moving forward towards your intended goals will cost your time, energy, and even difficult decisions. You may want to begin with journaling the following questions and answers so you can take a closer look at your current state of being. To change your life, you need to know what you want to change and why.

1. Do you find yourself stuck in a cycle of negative emotions and feelings towards others?
2. Are you currently satisfied with your level of education? Why or why not?
3. Do you currently struggle with feelings of jealousy or envy? If so, who and why?
4. What are you doing right now that is causing you to want to change?
5. Is there someone you can trust to help you write out your goals and dreams?
6. Do you find yourself stuck in a particular situation and you don’t know how to progress?
7. Is it a daily struggle to accept where you are in life because you don’t believe you deserve better?
8. In your current situation, are you being fulfilled or drained?
9. Are your relationships serving your passions and purpose?
10. What are the things you cannot change?
11. What are the things you can change?
12. Do you know what is essential and non-essential to change?

For you to make changes in your life you must look at your current situation. This is often the most difficult action; however, it is the most powerful one you take. Basically, you need to see the world from a different perspective. You will notice that there are things in your life that you cannot change and it’s important to note those. Once you answer the questions honestly, you can make changes as needed.

Changes in life are not always easy or pretty. In fact, some people find that change is more difficult than they expected. For this reason, it is important to know what you want and why you need to make the changes. If you have your “Why Statement” written out in front of you, as you make changes, you are more likely to push through any difficulties.

**Essential versus Non-Essential**

As you write out your goals for your dream life, take into consideration what changes are essential and non-essential. You may have been taught to give it all you’ve got when it comes to your job or college education. If you realize ‌you are not in a job or college that is in alignment with your desires and talents, then cut back in areas that will allow you to focus on your goals.

**Essential Things**

Essential changes are things that you need to continue doing to move forward. Examples would be keeping your current job so you can pay the bills, finishing your education, or living with relatives because you can’t afford to live on your own. You may be able to change essential things over time, while changing the non-essential things first.

**Non-Essential Things**

These are things you can stop doing immediately that will automatically give you positive results. Non-essential things are actions or thoughts that you can control. Examples would be making your coffee at home or packing your lunch and skipping the drive thru. If you desire to live on your own or to pay off credit card debt, then perhaps you can pick up a few hours at work.

Additional examples of non-essential things would be staying at a job you hate long enough to find a replacement job. If you see that you spend time with toxic people or are consuming unhealthy foods and beverages, then you can take immediate action to change these situations. Always do your best in whatever situation you are in, however, exerting your energy on non-essential things can lead you to burnout or feelings of despair.

**Taking Control**

Once you removed the things that are not serving you and you’ve emotionally detached yourself from things you can control, then you can move on. You will have more time to work on your dream life. Visualizing your future self requires you to look at your limiting beliefs and fears so you can find practical solutions for them. As you progress through making these changes, you may continue to see or notice things that are holding you back physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually.

Taking control of your daily situations is an ongoing activity. If you struggle with any of these changes, take a step-by-step approach so you can work through them. Finding ways to encourage yourself or seek positive influence from outside sources will help you overcome obstacles.

Designing your dream life is a journey that will take you through emotions that you may have never experienced before. This is normal and can cause even the strongest of people to question their own personal beliefs. Keep your mindset on what is true, what is right, and what is acceptable for your life. Knowing what you believe in and what you want for your life is one of the most important decisions you will need to make throughout your adult life. Don’t be afraid to take chances on your dream as long as you are within safe boundaries while using wisdom to guide you. If you find that you are struggling in any area of your goals, then be sure to seek help from a trusted resource or friend.