

How to set **realistic** expectations to meet your goals

It's easy to make pie-in-the-sky goals. Grand proclamations like bucket lists or five- and 10-year goals indulge fantastic ideas. It's the process of getting there that can prove to be a challenge.

No big accomplishment happens quickly. There could be 10s of steps between you and the goal. The secret is to set realistic expectations along the way—taking steps or reaching smaller goals that may be just as satisfying.

Be **SMART** about it

Whatever your goals are, there is a way to get there. By setting realistic expectations, success is more likely. The SMART system³ teaches you to create goals that are:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**elevant
- **T**ime-bound



Common reasons include:¹

- A shift in priorities
- Procrastination
- Fear of failure or success
- A lack of clarity in the goal or a shift in focus²

Specific

A vague, general goal may sound great, but it's the specific ones that hit the mark. Write a description of what you want to achieve and what you're going to do to get there. Ask yourself:

- What exactly do I want to achieve?
- Why do I want to reach this goal?
- How do I do it?
- Are there any conditions or limitations?

Measurable

This means there is a "before" and "after" that you can measure to track your progress. It might be a number that changes up or down or a visible, physical change. Break it down into one or more measurable elements.

Achievable

It's OK to shoot for the stars, but your expectations should be realistic for your current life. You want to meet them and feel successful. Set goals that you can accomplish rather than goals that are too challenging. That can set you up for failure.⁴

Relevant

Why is this goal important to you? Make sure your goal is worthwhile so you're more likely to stick with it.

Time-bound

Set a start date and deadline for each goal. Make it realistic yet flexible if you need to adjust slightly. With a time frame, you can visualize the finish line for your goal. Motivate yourself by putting your deadline on your phone or on sticky notes in your car or on your fridge.



With some thoughtful planning and reasonable expectations, anything is possible. You can do it!

Learn how Teladoc Health can help support you on your wellness journey. To sign up or learn more, go to TeladocHealth.com/Smile/HEALTHYCOUNTY.

¹<https://summer.harvard.edu/blog/how-high-school-students-can-set-and-accomplish-their-goals/>

²<https://bootcamp.miami.edu/blog/4-reasons-fail-to-achieve-goals/>

³<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/focus-on-forgiveness/202401/5-essential-tips-for-goal-setting>

⁴<https://www.nami.org/people/mental-health-resolutions-for-the-new-year/>