Goal setting is the first step in taking charge of one’s life. Without goals life will lack direction. This can lead to a cycle of “failure” which will continue to repeat itself. Lack of direction leads to non-achievement, then to boredom, depression, and a negative self-image. This negative self-image contributes to a lack of motivation. It can immobilize a person and prevent them from taking action. A positive step needs to be taken somewhere in the cycle in order to break away from failure.

Once this positive step has been taken, a person can move on to the “Success Cycle.” This is a simpler cycle. One sets a goal, and when the goal is achieved it brings satisfaction and increases self-esteem.

Setting and achieving a simple goal can be the beginning of many successes. Achieving a goal increases self-esteem. It gives a sense of satisfaction resulting in more self-confidence, which is key to reaching more difficult goals. Success makes for success. Transferring the skills used with small goal setting makes larger ones easier to attain.

## Goal Setting For Success

Successful people know where they want to go and actively plan steps to reach those destinations. They set goals. In Ruby K. Payne’s book, “A Framework for Understanding Poverty” she states that individuals in poverty “live for the moment”. They are not proactive in their actions nor do they consider the implications of today’s actions on the future. Destiny and fate are major tenants of their belief system and choice is rarely considered.

Survival skills are centered on the needs of the immediate moment. Impoverished individuals seek a job, not a career, to satisfy their needs and they rarely plan for future events. “The future does not exist except as a word.” (Payne). As a result they perceive themselves as having little choice in what happens to them or what they can do. Options are hardly ever examined because of this perception.

Setting goals is common to the middle and upper classes of our society. Individuals in poverty are not familiar with planners, organizational tools or methods of goal setting. Setting goals calls for certain cognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies are basic ways of processing information. They are the pathways to the mind. Individuals in poverty need to learn the structure and use of cognitive strategies. Once learned, goal setting is a possibility. Individuals can be taught how to make good choices and how to set goals. Once learned, they will need the support of teachers and trainers to reinforce these skills. Small successes lead to larger ones. The trainers can supply support by setting expectations, providing guidance, and being role models and mentors.

Goal setting is important for all activities in people’s lives. It gives a sense of power and control over one’s life. The setting and obtaining of one’s goals is how self-esteem is built and reinforced. Success breeds success.

The following information will provide you with some of the resources you need to teach your clientele the important life skills of goal setting and choice making.


### What are the greatest myths about poverty?

There are many myths that surround the issue of poverty. The most common are:

1. **All poor are long-term.**
   Most are not.

2. **All welfare recipients are long-term.**
   The average period of welfare for a recipient is 3 years.

3. **Most poverty is found in our nation’s inner cities.**
   Although poverty problems are often severe in these neighborhoods, many more of our nation’s poor live outside of these neighborhoods.
The Choice Making Process

Many people go through life without thinking about why they make the decisions they do or whether another choice may have been better. Teaching individuals the choice-making process can help them to make decisions that will allow them to reach their goals and obtain more satisfaction in the use of their resources.

There are three steps in the choice-making process:

• Gathering information about the choices available is the first step. What options are available? How much does each option cost? What are the advantages and disadvantages to each choice? Encourage clients to gather as much information as possible by talking to friends and relatives and others who might offer useful information. Perhaps reading consumer magazines or going to the store to compare products and features would help. All of the information gathered will help them to make the best choice. They may want to create a comparison chart to list the options and advantages and disadvantages to each choice.

• The second step is to judge and rank the options. Keeping their values, goals and available resources in mind, clients need to rank the options. Which option is better for or more important to their family? Since they place more importance on some values than others, some values will have more influence on their behavior than others. Keep in mind that your clients may not make the same judgments you would make. Ask your clients to rank their options listing the “best” option first.

• The last step in the choice-making process is to choose the action or item that is best in their situation. Each step, when successfully completed, develops skills your clients can apply to the decisions they need to make.

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Research Update: Most Adolescents Expect to Reach Their Goals

Earlier research has found that the goals adolescents set for themselves can shape and determine the kind of selves they become and influence actual achievement. Most research in goal setting has focused on academic achievement, with less attention on long-term goals. Also, there have been significant disparities in the ambitions of children from various immigrant groups. There were two principal areas of focus for the present study: (1) identify the long-term goals of adolescents from five ethnic groups (Mexican American, Vietnamese, Armenian, African American and European American), determine whether they expected to achieve their goals, and examine differences among ethnic groups in these variables; and (2) examine the attributions for future success or failure in attaining goals among these adolescents. The sample included 371 adolescents from families of various SES (socioeconomic status) levels. Youth answered open-ended questions pertaining to their (a) goals, If you could do anything you wanted with your life, what would you most want to do and be? (b) expected outcome, Do you think that you will be able to do or be that? and (c) attribution, Why or why not? Results found no significant association between goals and ethnicity, with SES controlled. Overall, 64.4% of the adolescents expected to attain their goals, 19.1% were not sure and 12.1% believed they would not reach their goals.


5 Steps to Reach your Goals

Step One
Clearly identify your goal. Write it down. Be specific.

Step Two
Weigh the benefits of the end result. How will the end result benefit you? What will you have to give up?

Step Three
Brainstorm different ways to achieve your goal. Determine what resources you’ll need.

Step Four
Commit to the goal. Set a realistic target date to achieve your goal. Decide on a plan for accomplishing your goal.

Step Five
Be flexible. Things always don’t go as planned. Evaluate if you need to adjust your plan or your goal.

Welfare to Work Curriculum

Help prepare welfare recipients to enter the workforce.

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

California residents should contact their local county Cooperative Extension Nutrition, Family and Consumer Science advisor. Their phone number can be found in the county section of the government pages of your local phone directory.

Out of state subscription requests should be sent to Connie Costello, University of California, Riverside, 135 Highlander Hall, Riverside, CA 92521, or connie.costello@ucr.edu. Electronic subscriptions are free.
Reaching My Goals

Step One
Clearly identify the goal. Write down your goal. Be as detailed as possible! The target you want to reach is clearer when the goal is specific.

Example: generic goal- “I want to get a job.”
          specific goal- “I want to get a job within six months that will help me support my family.”

Step Two
Weigh the benefits of the end result. Ask yourself if the end result will benefit you. Is it what you really want or need? Is it worth making the sacrifice? If not, go back to step one and re-evaluate your goal.

Example: outcome- “By taking this life skills class, I will learn information I need to get and keep a job.”
          benefit- “I will have skills I can use to help me get a job and income.”

Step Three
Brainstorm different options to achieve the goal. Determine the total resources needed to achieve the goal. Then, write down all the possible options you could take to achieve it.

Example: resources- “Training for a job.”
          options- “I can take this class, find out about scholarships to community college, sign up for more classes at the community college, answer ads in the newspaper, talk to my counselor at DPSS, etc.”

Step Four
Commit to the goal. Set a realistic target date by which to achieve the goal. Then, commit to a plan that will lead you to accomplish your goal. Self-discipline to stick with your plan is the key to success.

Example: “I will get a job in 6 months by completing this class and using the county job placement services to find a job.”

Step Five
Be flexible. Remember that life doesn’t always go as planned. Something may come up, such as a death in the family, a car problem that needs to be fixed, or a leak in your roof. Take time to review your plan. Consider whether your goal can be achieved by adjusting your plan, or you need to adjust your goal.
Lección 1 - Cómo alcanzar sus metas

Para lograr mis metas

Primer paso
Identifique claramente la meta. Escriba su meta con todo lujo de detalles. El objetivo que se ha trazado será más claro entre más específica sea su meta.

Ejemplo: Meta general - “Quiero conseguir un empleo”.
Meta específica - “Quiero conseguir un puesto en los próximos seis meses para ayudar a sostener a mi familia”.

Segundo paso
Beneficios qué obtendrá. Pregúntese si el resultado de sus esfuerzos le beneficiará. ¿Es esto lo que usted realmente quiere o necesita? ¿Vale la pena el sacrificio? De no ser así, regrese al primer paso y vuelva a evaluar su meta.

Ejemplo: Resultado - “Al tomar esta clase, aprenderé cosas que necesito saber para conseguir y mantener un empleo”.
Beneficio - “Aprenderé habilidades que puedo usar para conseguir un trabajo y aumentar mis ingresos”.

Tercer paso
Piense en diversas formas de alcanzar su meta. Piense en todos los recursos que necesitará para lograr su meta. Luego, anote todas las opciones a su alcance para alcanzar su meta.

Ejemplo: Recursos - “Recibir entrenamiento para un trabajo”.
Opciones - “Puedo tomar esta clase, informarme sobre becas que ofrezca el colegio comunitario, inscribirme en más clases, responder a un anuncio clasificado en el periódico, hablar con mi consejero del DPSS, etc.”

Cuarto paso
Comprométase a lograr su meta. Fíjese una fecha sensata para alcanzar su meta. Luego, comprométase a seguir un plan que le ayudará a lograr su meta. La clave del éxito está en seguir el plan al pie de la letra.

Ejemplo: “Conseguiré un empleo en seis meses, después de completar esta clase, y usaré los servicios que ofrece la oficina de empleos del condado”.

Quinto paso
Sea flexible. Recuerde que no todo resulta como lo planeamos. Pueden surgir problemas, como la muerte de un ser querido, un auto que necesita reparaciones, un techo que tiene goteras. Revise su plan cuidadosamente. Fíjese si puede hacer ajustes a su plan o si es necesario cambiar su meta.