

PARENT INFORMATION 5

Getting Going With Goal Setting

It will come as no surprise that having a goal is useful when travelling along The Learning Highway. It gives children a focus, a target and a specific way to invest and use their energy.

A simple analogy is the force of an elastic band. An elastic band that is stretched between two objects usually means that they will get closer and closer – sometimes quickly, sometimes more slowly. We prove this with the braces on children’s teeth – how quickly do teeth move when a gentle force is applied?

Goals are a little bit like braces – they provide structure and direction for movement towards a desired outcome. Children can, and should be taught to make goals that are meaningful for them. Goals can be:

- I’m going to keep my bedroom tidy for one whole week.
- I’m going to do my homework every day in Term 2.
- I’m going to get better at spelling by practising every day.
- I’m going to catch the ball once at basketball on Saturday.

Goals don’t always have to be about achieving an academic or sporting outcome. Goals can also be made for improving behaviour, better mood management, making new friends, trying harder at home etc.

Your child has been introduced to writing simple goals in the following format:

W What?	What is the end point – the achievement going to be?
W Who?	Needs to be around to help with achieving the ‘What’?
W When?	Setting a realistic time for the goal to be achieved creates momentum and movement.

Do you write goals? Do you have goals? How do you check your progress, reward yourself and keep yourself accountable along the way? Research from around the world concludes that a very important part of success and achievement is being able to set goals and work towards them.

There are wonderful TOOLS online to help adults to formulate goals using frameworks called SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound) goals and CREATE (Clear, Realistic, Ethical, Achievable, Time bound Evidence-based) goals. It might be of interest to look up how those goal formats are structured and create your own goals.

Asking your child to write a WWW Goal for their chores at home is a good place to start. A sense of achievement at having reached a goal is a pleasure for most children, and is a

very important part of the process of developing their optimistic thinking patterns about being able to achieve small and big things in life, with effort and focus.

Children and adults often feel discouraged by their mistakes – across many areas. The dieter is a common example: a slip up leading to self-recrimination as ‘mistake and ‘failure’ are often paired together. If, however the dieter’s slip-up serves as a way to make a positive change - as in, ‘I’ll eat a better lunch tomorrow so I’m not hungry at 4pm’ or, ‘I’ll eat something before I shop - so I don’t buy chocolate because I’m hungry,’ then the ‘mistake’ has had a helpful outcome.

Acknowledging the importance and necessity of mistakes is essential to achieving goals. Rather than a barrier to achieving success, mistakes are part of learning: a way to step up, learn more, change patterns and processes and move forward having more knowledge than previously. Communicating the importance and acceptability of making mistakes is essential to your child’s self-acceptance and their willingness to take risks in their learning without worrying about a negative outcome from errors.

Talk to your child about your goals, a mistake that you made, and how that helped you to learn and keep moving forward towards your goal. Perfectionism can result in some children missing new learning opportunities because of a fear of not meeting their own or other’s expectations. Setting WWW Goals with your child and brainstorming possible BUMPS, HAZARDS and the TOOLS to deal with them is useful in decreasing anxiety about perfectionism. If your child’s wish for perfection, however, is causing distress and disrupting their life – or yours – seek the assistance of a suitably qualified Health Professional.

In the primary school years as your child is travelling on The Learning Highway there will be many moments of being a Highway HERO. Equally, there can be many BUMPS and HAZARDS that require the use of good HIGHWAY TOOLS – like CPR Supa Thinking, The Triple A’s 4 Getting Things Done or setting goals using the WWW.

The more TOOLS your child has in their HIGHWAY TOOLBOX the greater their chances of being happy, successful and resilient...

REFLECTION POINT:

*Success, happiness and resilience are common desires of most parents for their children. How do you actively work towards **your own** success, happiness and resilience? Is it ad hoc, or are you organised, with a plan, with a goal?*