

## **PARENT INFORMATION 4**

### **Getting Going With Goal Setting**

It will come as no surprise that having a goal is useful on The Learning Highway, providing a targeted focus and a specific way for a child to invest 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, other times 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 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 will keep my bedroom tidy for one week.
- I will do my homework every day in term two.
- I will improve my spelling by practising every day.
- I will catch the ball once at basketball on Saturday.

Goals don’t have to focus on achieving an academic or sporting outcome. They can be related to 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:

<b>W</b> What?	What is the end-point – the specific achievement?
<b>W</b> Who?	Will be able to help me to achieve the ‘What’?
<b>W</b> When?	Setting a realistic time for the goal to be achieved creates momentum and movement.

Do you have goals? Do you write them down? How do you check your progress, reward yourself and keep yourself accountable along the way? Research from around the world proves 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 the frameworks of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound) and CREATE (Clear, Realistic, Ethical, Achievable, Time bound Evidence-based). It might be of interest to research how those goal formats are structured - and create your own.

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

Older children are also developing patterns of resilient thinking regarding unforeseen events and adversity. This ability to cope with and bounce back from adversity, is part of a developmental process, and children in upper primary school are ready to understand that this 'thing' called L-I-F-E happens and priorities may have to change accordingly.

This also applies to adults, a good example being setting a weight loss target - and then L-I-F-E happens. Perhaps a child becomes ill and repeated trips to the doctor leaves little time for exercise, the planning and cooking of meals, which means the goal needs adjustment or the time frame lengthened. It's L-I-F-E. Becoming upset, regretful or frustrated doesn't change the reality of the situation. It's flexibility that's required.

This has been taught at The 3 R's of Goal Setting:

<b>R</b> Reflect	Is the goal still useful? Have things changed and does the goal also need to change?
<b>R</b> Review	Are the correct resources and support still in place? Is the time frame appropriate for achievement?
<b>R</b> Refresh	Does the goal need to be re-written taking into account changes?

Teaching children to Reflect on, Review and Refresh their goals sets patterns of flexible thinking that's a life skill. The earlier children understand and accept that life changes, people change, health changes – without being pessimistic – the easier it is for your child to be flexible and accept, rather than resist, change.

This week, work with your child to write a goal using the WWW format. You can make a time to revisit the goal – perhaps a month – and use The 3 R's to evaluate progress and make any changes. Goal setting is a healthy behaviour for your child to develop, and will help them throughout their lives to maintain patterns of motivated and goal-directed behaviour.

**REFLECTION POINT:**

*Do you write goals? Have your goals changed over your lifetime? How do you know when you've achieved a goal, and how do you celebrate and reward yourself? Adults who set goals for any aspect of their life – going on holiday, levelling up at work, parenting goals – create patterns of success and happiness.*