

Goal- Setting and Motivation

The key to success in any exercise programme is setting goals and focusing your mind on reaching them. How well and how fast you achieve your goals depends on how motivated you are. But first you need to set clear goals and work out a plan to measure your success

Smart Goals

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Agreed

R = Realistic

T = Time Scaled

Specific

Write down exactly what you want to achieve/avoid vague statements. To help you crystallise your goals, write down the reasons why you want to improve: increase speed/distance. Go beyond the superficial reasons and find the inner motivations that are driving your goals. Research shows that it is the internal motivators that really drive us to success.

Measurable

You need to be able to measure your progress. Long term goals can be broader in scope, but short term goals must be quite specific. Keep your training records for future reference

Agreed

Ideally, discuss and agree your goals with some one: Coach/qualified instructor. The most important thing is committing your goals to paper: this signals a commitment to change. Write them in the form of a personal mission statement: then sign and date what you have written. Better still, ask some one else to sign the document as a witness, as you would with a contract. Then place a copy somewhere you can see it each day. The goals will constantly remind you that they are waiting to be achieved. If

you do not commit your goals to paper, then it is unlikely that you'll be able to commit to the work necessary to make them happen. Like a legal contract, this technique will keep your mind focused.

Realistic

The goals should be realistic – attainable for your body size, natural shape and lifestyle. There's nothing wrong with aiming for the top but, at the same time, be realistic. If it's a gold medal you seek, study the path others have taken to achieve that goal and check it against where you are starting from, and how much time and energy you have to follow a similar path.

Time Scaled

Set a clear time scale for reaching your goals. Decide on a deadline – this prompts action and sets your plan in motion. Without a clear deadline, it's easy to put off starting your programme and end up never achieving your goals. Once you have fixed your major goals, set mini-goals, which can be reached in a relatively short period of time (such as 12 weeks), and long term goals, which can be reached over, say a year. You may even find it helpful to break up each 12 week goal into distinct segments and focus on progress you make each week. Set out a programme of activities or steps that you need to complete in order to reach each goal. These steps may include weight training, eating six balanced meals a day, doing a cardio workout. The key is to make sure each step is specific, realistic and achievable.

Visualise Success

The ability to visualise success is one of the most effective tools of high-achievers. Use imagery to help you stick to your programme. If you are finding it difficult to motivate yourself for a work out, visualise yourself successfully completing it. Use as many senses as possible- the sight of the pool, the sounds around you, smell of chlorine, see yourself completing each length.

Reward Yourself

Give yourself rewards when you have reached a goal, no matter how small. This could be something as simple as a star for reaching your weekly target, a new swimsuit, or a trip to the cinema.