

# The Right Goal at the Right Time



## ***Goal-Setting in the New Year***

In her book *Ten Fun Things to Do Before You Die*, Karol Jackowski presents an entertaining approach for getting us to consider how we are spending the precious days that make up our lives by encouraging us to make a list of all we want to accomplish or experience while on this earth. As mentors, we know the importance of goal-setting. However, the children we mentor may not have had the experience of setting goals with an adult.

Try introducing goal-setting to your mentee by talking about New Year's resolutions. Explain what a resolution is and why people make resolutions at the beginning of a new year. If you are willing, share some of yours. (No need to share that your past resolution to avoid chocolate was an abject failure!)

Next, ask your mentee if s/he would like to set any goals and in what area, such as school, home, sports, friends. S/he may name something very specific and immediate such as "Learn the multiplication tables" or "Score five baskets in the next game" or even "Stop fighting with my sister/my mother/the mean girl, etc." Or what comes to mind might be long-term such as "Go to college" or even "Live in a big house."

For ideas how to support your mentee in making a plan, see the [\*\*January 2016 Mentor Minute\*\*](#)

Another central idea is that sometimes our plan to reach our goals does not turn out to be successful. Help your mentee know that this is okay; that intent to change or improve is always admirable; and that the key benefit to effort is what one has learned along the way. Ask your mentee if s/he would like to make a revised plan and try again.

## ***Low Self-Efficacy Versus High Self-Efficacy***

Do mentees feel powerful or powerless when it comes to their own direction? Dr. Gail Gross writes in a blog post about the importance of self-efficacy:

If you feel that you cannot really change the outcome of your behavior, you have a sense of low self-efficacy. And also, if you determine that you are in some way deficient and cannot reach your goal, you are more likely to make less resolutions and goals. If you fall into this category, you are one of those people who tends to give up rather than fight and push toward your efforts.

On the other hand, if in fact, you feel your future is within your own making and that you have a sense of self-control over the completion of goals and resolutions, you are a person with high self-efficacy. This is the very situation that our children find themselves in when they attempt to set goals and resolutions. As a result, success or failure is seen as resting within the domain of his or her own control and therefore he or she is more likely to achieve his or her goals and resolutions. Thus, a high self-efficacy person can push past his or her effort, stick to the problem, and reach for his or her goals and resolutions.

**It is in this space between the low-efficacy person and the high-efficacy person that researchers find people that can, in fact, change the course of their lives by changing their behavior.** <http://drgailgross.com/teaching-children-confidence-goal-setting/>

And that is the domain of mentoring: to build resilience by showing mentees that you believe in their ability to change their perspective!

## ***Little Victories***

Teach your mentee that goal setting is not just for children, but something that adults do all the time. Make this a part of your relationship going forward. And, that not all goals are measurable, but they can still be worthy.

Pierre Fontenot writes under the title *Uncle P's Bedtime Stories* for publications in Louisiana and southeast Texas. He offers some homespun wisdom about ways we can make progress in life in article called "The Little Victories." Enjoy these few excerpts:

- ❖ Hope is a little victory. Facing bad facts, we could be crumpled up and giving up, but we keep telling ourselves that we'd never have known lemonade unless someone just like us hadn't looked differently at the lemons.
- ❖ Doing the little things is always a little victory. You could cut a corner, but you don't. Nobody watching, but you hold your line.
- ❖ Getting out of bed is a little victory. It's no small thing, to just get in motion. Do a little doing, next thing you know, a lot of doing got done.
- ❖ Seeking is a victory. Especially when you're seeking truth. It's a quiet thing. You may not be making a fuss, but you're making steps.
- ❖ Listening to what others have to say is a victory. It gives us a chance to feed our mind.

*Thank you for using your time together to build your mentee's resilience and their confidence that they can find the potential they choose!*