

How to Set a SMART Goal

SMART is an acronym used to help fine-tune self-care goals. There are variations as far as what different groups say it stands for, but one of the more common versions is

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-Bound. SMART goals can be helpful to include into an Integrative Health plan. To write one, begin by focusing on a goal that is important to a Veteran. This goal should tie in to what really matters to them and closely relates to their Mission, Aspiration, Purpose (MAP).

After you have a general goal in mind, apply the principles of SMART goals to focus in on how to reach it. These are featured in the table below. As you help someone set a goal, remember the following:

- It is better to break a general goal down into smaller goals that are easier to reach, in order to increase the odds of success.
- The more detail the better. “I will exercise more” is very vague. “Starting on Monday, July 1, I will walk in the mall for 20 minutes and keep doing that every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday” is more detailed and incorporates all of the SMART elements.
- Make sure both you and the patient agree (at least to some degree) about the goal. Shared goal setting is a powerful process. Explain your reasoning.
- Don’t forget to follow up later to see how it is going with reaching the goal. If they are stalled out, is it best to change goals, or simplify it somehow?
- Table 1 is designed to help you take a patient through this process.

Putting the “SMART” in Goal Setting

SMART Goal Element	Questions to Consider
<p>Specific</p> <p>S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be very clear and detailed about what you want to do and why. • What is required? What are the challenges? • How will you do it? What are your assets and resources? • Who will be involved?
<p>Measurable</p> <p>M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you know you are making progress? • How will you know you have reached your goal?
<p>Attainable</p> <p>A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have what you need to reach the goal? • Is it really doable? • Build on small steps, one at a time.
<p>Relevant</p> <p>R</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this goal worth it? • Is the goal aligned with your values? • Is the timing right?
<p>Time-Bound</p> <p>T</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time will you spend? • How often (daily, weekly, monthly)? • How long do you need? • Are there any deadlines you have to meet? • When will you start?



Write your goal below:

I will...

This exercise was adapted from: Rollnick S, Miller W, Butler C. Motivational Interviewing in Health Care: Helping Patients Change Behavior. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2008.

Once you finish this exercise, ask yourself the following:

- How do you make the person setting the goal more accountable? Can you call them, or have a team member do so? Is there a way to involve a friend or family member to help them?
- How can you or your team help them to succeed?
- Is it possible to involve someone like a coach or a peer partner for support?
Author(s)

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