



School Counsellor Newsletter

Edition 33

Setting SMART goals

Many students engage in counselling to achieve positive change whether it be to do with their thoughts, actions, learning, relationships with others or whatever is important in their lives. As part of achieving that change it is important to talk about goals and what it is exactly that they would like to change and what it is that they can control and try to make better. In 2019, I wrote a newsletter about goal setting, in particular the difference between performance based goals, which can be controlled by the individual, and outcome based goals, which are less able to be controlled by the individual. This newsletter looks at how to set SMART goals, which is a very useful process to engage with when setting performance based goals.

The concept of setting SMART goals is promoted by many different people and organisations, as a quick google search will show. My intention in this newsletter is to give an overview of how to set SMART goals so that you can support your son, or yourself, to use this process when setting goals. You may choose to look online for resources, such as worksheets or guides, to support you. Please note that different websites may have different words for some of the terms, which may be more helpful than those I have used below - do look at different options for what will work best for your son.

A SMART goal is: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**imely.

- To be **specific** about your goal ask your son, "what do you want to accomplish?" If they reply that they would "like to get outside more" ask them to be more specific so that the goal becomes something like "each day after school and I will go outside and do something active for at least 15 minutes."

- To make sure that this is **measurable**, develop a way to help your son know when he has reached his goal. For example, you could create a sticker chart together, or something similar, so that your son can tick off each day he is able to go outside and do something active after school. You might like to add a column so that your son can note what he is doing, if he spends more time outside on certain days or starts doing or creating new activities. This will help him to track his progress and potentially develop his goal.
- So that your son has the best chance to **achieve** his goal help him to set three steps he can take such as 1) having a healthy afternoon snack before going outside so that he has enough energy to be active; 2) having the right clothes or equipment laid out, perhaps before school, so that it is easy for him to get ready and go outside when he gets home from school; 3) planning what the activity might be the night before so that he knows what to look forward to.
- It is important that the goal is **relevant** so it will be helpful to talk to your son about why this goal is important to him and to you as his parents. For example, being outside will be good for your son's wellbeing and being active is helpful for overall physical health and fitness. Talk to your son about how this will help him with his focus on his homework or school work the next day, and having a good sleep each night because he has been outside being active and engaging all of his body and senses. It could be useful to talk about the goal being realistic as well.
- Finally, be **timely** and set a timeframe so that your son can clearly see what he is working towards and can understand that even if he does not meet his goal each day, for example he may be unwell or have another activity on after school, he can still make progress towards his overall goal. If the timeframe is by the end of the month it could be very helpful to check in at the end of each week to talk about progress and whether any adjustments to the SMART goal plan need to be made.

I hope that this newsletter will help you and your son to set SMART goals, in particular making the process as specific and helpful as possible so that your son feels supported and engaged with his goal setting.



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Jenelle is a Registered Provisional Member with NZAC (New Zealand Association of Counsellors).

If you wish to discuss the services the School Counsellor can provide, please see your son's homeroom teacher or Amos Pilgrim:

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