

Quality of Self Management Goal-Setting

Setting goals with patients is an important step in helping them self-manage their own health-related behaviors. Experienced healthcare teams find that following the two basic principles described below helps patients have more early success, and small successes one after the other builds confidence and effective self-management.

High quality goals are patient-centered and behaviorally specific. Developing high quality goals increases the likelihood of early and sustained self-management success. Modeled after one team's efforts, the rating scale below represents a simple way to assess if the goals we set are behaviorally specific.

- **Patient-centered not Paper- centered**

Goals really need to be something the patient wants to do, not something they are told they should do. It's their wanting that gives them the motivation to follow through. You might say "What's the most important thing you'd like to work on right now?" We might be tempted to simply have patients choose from a list of behaviors we know it would be good for them to change, "paper centered" goals. Self-management "tools," (pieces of paper) can help educate patients and give them choices of things that would be good to work on, but the goals need to come from the patient, the person who'll be making the change!

- **Make a Plan – Be Specific (and assess confidence)**

Goal setting is most useful to patients when it is followed by specific plans for how to achieve it. When goals are general, for example, "I want to lose weight," they are not very useful for helping patients follow through. If we guide patients to choose behavior specific actions, like "I will not eat ice cream" it's the beginning of a plan. Then help them be very specific about the plan – when (timing, duration), how often, where, how they will manage the change, and finally how confident they are that they can accomplish this plan. For example: "I am going to eat fruit for dessert instead of ice cream after dinner four times this week, Monday through Thursday. My confidence level is 8."

Measuring Behavior Specific Quality of Goal-Setting: The BSQ Scale *

We can measure the behavioral specificity of our goal-setting with a simple 5 point scoring scheme.

- 1 = Specify activity (e.g. walking; quit smoking) (what)
- 1 = Specify duration or timing (e.g. how long each period of walking; Monday morning for stopping smoking) (when)
- 1 = Specify frequency (e.g. how often will the walking occur; with every urge) (how often)
- 1 = Specify location (e.g. where the walking will occur) or how to manage the change (e.g. nicotine gum vs. cigarette) (where or how)

- 1 = Specify level of confidence (patient's confidence in meeting goals, 1-10) (confidence)

Examples

- 1 = *I am going to try to walk more this week. (what)*
- 2 = *I plan 20-minute walks this week. (what, duration)*
- 3 = *I plan 20-minute walks Monday, Wednesday and Friday this week. (what, duration, how often)*
- 4 = *I plan 20-minute walks to the mall and back on Monday, Wednesday and Friday this week. (what, duration, how often, where)*
- 5 = *My level of confidence of actually fulfilling this plan of 20 minutes walks to the mall and back on Monday, Wednesday and Friday this week is 7 out of a possible 10. (what, duration, how often, where, confidence rating)*

- 1. = *I am going to quit smoking (what)*
- 2. = *I plan to quit smoking this coming Monday, October 4th. (what, when)*
- 3. = *I plan to quit smoking on Monday, October 4th, and will use nicotine gum to manage craving. (what, when, how)*
- 4. = *I will quit smoking on Monday, October 4th and will chew a piece of nicotine gum every 2 hours as well as whenever I have a strong urge to smoke. (what, when, how, how often)*
- 5. = *I will quit smoking on Monday, October 4th and will chew a piece of nicotine gum every 2 hours as well as whenever I have a strong urge to smoke. My level of confidence of actually fulfilling this plan is 8 out of 10. (what, when, how, how often, confidence rating)*

*Adapted from tool developed by Devin Sawyer, MD, and Shari Gioimo, MA, St. Peter Family Practice, Olympia, WA.

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