Setting Goals Can Help Improve Depression

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Overcoming Depression

Depression leads to more depression, and the easiest way to stay depressed is to forget about setting goals. Low motivation and low energy associated with depression can make setting goals difficult, and poor self-esteem may have you convinced that your best efforts will not be good enough. Do not listen to depression. Goals shape your life and give you direction; without goals, you are a rudderless boat floating wherever the current carries you. Let's look at overcoming depression.

Play it SMART

Identifying good goals is the first step. The goals should be:

- **Specific**. Good goals should be specific and clear. State what you want and be as detailed as possible. Everyone wants to be happy, but that is not specific. Saying that you want to make new friends is concrete and definitive.
- **Measurable.** Making a goal measurable is important so that you know when it will be accomplished. If you just say, “I want to lose weight,” you need to know how much. Adding numbers is a great way to make a measurable goal. “I want to lose 10 lbs.”
- **Attainable**. It would be great if you won a marathon, but if you have never completed a 5k, this is not realistic or attainable. Setting goals that are too high will lead to disappointment and continued depression. Setting a series of small, attainable goals will encourage.
- **Relevant**. Set goals that matter. Learning the words to your favorite song is a goal, but not one that will alleviate your depression. Know what you are working towards and take action.
- **Timely**. Give yourself a deadline to follow. This serves as motivation to keep you on track and remain determined. Be rigid with your timeframe while allowing small doses of flexibility.

Make Goals Real

- **Write it down.** Putting the information on paper creates tangibility. It will remind you of what you are working for and why you want to achieve it.
- **Work backwards.** With goals, finding the place to start is tricky. You cannot proceed if you do not know where to begin. Break the goal down into smaller steps, starting at the end and moving to the beginning. If you want a new job, the process should look something like this: accept the job, prepare for the interview, agree to an interview, send in your resume and look for available jobs online.
- **See the prize.** Close your eyes and imagine what life will be like after you complete your goal. Think of the benefits and how your depression will lessen.
- **Spread the word.** You do not need to act alone when it comes to goals. Having assistance with a goal does not diminish the act. You could dig a ditch by yourself but it is easier (and more fun) to do it with others. Your friends and family will be happy to help.
- **Celebrate.** Victories on the road to your goal may seem small, but each step is a big accomplishment.

Praise yourself and establish rewards along the way for movement. Patting yourself on the back will build momentum, and you will be more likely to complete the next step.

Conclusion

Depression puts the focus on what you cannot do. Flip your thinking by setting goals. As long as you start small and successively move to bigger goals, you will improve your mood, motivation and energy. Get SMART and get started.