**Planning for Success in the New Year!**

*“*If you set goals and go after them with all the determination you can muster, your gifts will take you places that will amaze you.” —Les Brown

As we settle into 2025, it’s a great time to reflect on lesson’s learned this the past year and what we want to accomplish this year. But how do we make our “intentions” reality when there are so many distractions? Strategic goal setting is how we move from dreams, resolutions to the manifestation of our desires.

So how do we get started?

**Step 1: Create space.**We need to break away from our day-to-day duties and responsibilities and create space to dream about what we want to accomplish.

**Step 2: Identify your values.** What is most important in your life? We typically start with the family, health, happiness, but you want to go deeper for the purposes of a strategic goal planning. Think about what would truly make you feel fulfilled.

**Step 3: Develop a personal mission statement.** Write a short statement, just a sentence or two, based on the vision you have for your life and how you want to impact the world. This is not to redefine you but to give you clarity. Examples are: “To be leader to my team, live a balanced life and make a difference.” “In a year, I want to be a certified nurse who is helping save and change people’s lives.” Or “To be a parent who helps my children love themselves, ask for help when they need it, and know what actions and words will help them reach their goals.”

**Step 5: Identify your goals.** Create SMART goals that align with the core values you just identified. SMART is an acronym that stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound. This means your goals should be very precise, progress should be easy to track, realistic, should contribute to your mission statement and have a defined start and end date. It’s important to break your goals down into smaller, more manageable pieces. For example, if your goal is to lose 20 pounds, break it down into a goal of losing one pound per week. Then create a schedule that identifies specific time and space to work on your goals.

We all start off full of enthusiasm for achieving our new goals. But all too often, that initial burst of motivation quickly wanes, and we find ourselves struggling to stay on track. If this sounds familiar, don’t despair! Here are some simple tips to help you stay motivated and achieve your goals.

* Remember your Why! Create visual reminders of your mission statement and your goals posted in areas of your home or office that you frequent. Reminding yourself of your original motivation can help you stay focused when things get tough.
* Identifying an accountability partner, perhaps a colleague or good friend, can help you stick to your plan. Identify a regular time to check in (it could be a 15-minute call every other Sunday). Or schedule a time weekly, biweekly, or monthly time to review your progress on your own.
* Don’t be afraid to ask for help if you need it. There’s no shame in admitting that you need some support to achieve your goals. Prioritize choosing someone who will be supportive, encouraging and has a relevant knowledge base.
* Sometimes our goals change over time, and that’s okay! Life is constantly changing, and our goals should reflect that. If you find yourself no longer motivated by your original goal, it’s perfectly fine to adjust it. The important thing is to keep taking steps forward to goals that brings you fulfillment.

Congratulations! Now you have a blueprint to identify strategic goals that speak to who you are and how you want to make an impact? Use these strategies consistently and you will be on your way to creating a year with multiple wins!

Malika Curry, LCPC

Senior EAP Counselor