



WHEN SMART GOALS ARE NOT ALWAYS WISE

Many of us have been taught about setting goals through the use of the SMART acronym. The theory is that in order to be successful in our pursuits, our goals must be:

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**ttainable
- R**ealistic
- T**angible

“Goals that resonate with what is most important to you will keep you motivated and bring joy to your journey as you move toward your objectives.”

But for many, this template for goal setting is rigid and uninspiring. It puts the concept of planning and achievement in a linear framework that appeals only to the rational side of our brains. Our goals then become a list of “shoulds” that require us to be disciplined and methodical in order to reach our objectives.

As an alternative, substitute words for the SMART acronym that speak to you on an emotional level. Here is an example:

- S**ignificant
- M**eaningful
- A**tracting
- R**ewarding
- T**imely

Using this framework is more likely to result in a planning process that is successful and satisfying.

Significant—Goals that resonate with what is most important to you will keep you motivated and bring joy to your journey as you move toward your objectives.

Meaningful—Oftentimes individuals set goals based on what others—parents, employers, teachers, society—view as important. However, to be truly inspiring and satisfying, your goals must align with your own values and priorities. Only then will your goals be “full of meaning” for you!

Attracting—When your goals are both significant and meaningful to you, they will create a positive image that will draw you toward that which you want to experience and achieve. You won't have to rely on pure grit and determination to achieve your goals, but rather the clear vision of what you want in your life will focus your intention and guide your decisions on a day to day basis.

Rewarding—Sometimes we don't make progress toward our goals because, consciously or subconsciously, we are still weighing the costs and benefits of making this commitment. An honest appraisal of this inner conflict can bring clarity to the goal setting process. We are more likely to move toward goals that bring us a clear sense of reward along the journey as well as in reaching the destination.

Timely—Do you have the time required to commit to a specific goal? In embarking on this journey, is the timing right for you? In considering these questions, it is important to realize that some goals should have specific target dates and others should not.

By imposing deadlines, we can create stress that stifles our ability to overcome obstacles in creative ways. In addition, deadlines tend to cause us to set goals that are within our current reality. More open-ended goals encourage us to “dream big”—to stretch our imaginations and indulge in possibility thinking. 