
The 11 Principles of Effective Goal Setting

An InnerState Coaching Report

By Lisa Engles



INTRODUCTION

We all know that goal setting is a prerequisite to success in training and competition as well as life. At the beginning of the season, we sit down with to identify our goals, and often they're something like:

I want to get through the season without getting injured
My goal is to finish my first IM
I want to improve my times for Olympic distance races
I want to get faster on the run (bike)
I want to feel stronger climbing hills

The truth is that each of these are perfect examples of how *not* to set goals... you'll learn why as we dig deeper into this subject of effective goal setting.

Goal setting is actually more than just identifying what you want, and although the concept of goal setting is easy to understand, it's application needs more thought and planning than most of us realize.

One of the main problems is that the vast majority of people like you and me are unaware of the principles of goal setting and how to apply them effectively. We may be familiar with the S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time oriented) model of goal setting, but in my book, this model fails miserably.

First, the S.M.A.R.T model leaves out at least six of the key principles of goal setting. The overly simplistic model leads one to believe that goal setting is easier than it really is. Not to mention that it completely overlooks the fact that most of us have at least one if not more, self-sabotaging thoughts, beliefs and habit patterns that block us from achieving our highest potential.

The key purpose of this report is to give you a better understanding of how to use the 11 principles of goal setting to enhance your performance in training, racing and life, and to help you avoid disappointments in the upcoming season.

Objectives:




- Define goal setting and its prerequisites
- Identify the types of goal setting
- Look at why goal setting often fails
- Discover the most common mistakes in goal setting
- Discuss the principles of goal setting and how to effectively apply them to enhance your performance as well as to help you steer clear of disappointments

GOAL SETTING: DEFINITION, PREREQUISITES AND THE 3 TYPES

So what is goal setting?

Goal setting can be defined as *the process of objectively identifying something you want, developing a plan for how to get it and taking consistent action toward its' fulfillment.*

Goal setting has three prerequisites that must be fulfilled in order for it to be successful.

-  Commitment
-  Believability
-  Focus

Let's take a brief look at each of these prerequisites.

Commitment

First, any goal you have has to be worth striving for. Commitment is a pledge that you make to yourself to a certain purpose or line of conduct. It's perhaps the single most important factor to success because it ignites the internal drive toward action... which is needed in goal setting. Commitment also requires consistently acting in alignment with your beliefs.

Believability

Second, your goal must be backed the belief that it's possible. Of course, this is something that all traditional goal-setting models overlook, because most of the time we *consciously* think that our goals are possible otherwise we wouldn't set them. However, it's what's going on in the *subconscious mind* that will sabotage goal setting. There are several powerful tools and techniques that you can be used to clear subconscious limiting beliefs including *inquiry, meridian tapping techniques and neurolinguistic programming* (for more information on these please visit: www.InnerStateCoaching.com).

Focus

Third, goal setting requires an ability to stay present and focus on the task at hand... especially when you're setting goals for an event that won't happen for another 6, 9, 12 months or longer. You need to be able to stay focused on the daily task: physical and mental training plans that will eventually deliver you to the doorstep of success. Short term goals are tremendously helpful for maintaining focus. Otherwise, longer term goals can become too overwhelming leading to loss of confidence, motivation and frustration.

Types of Goals

Now we'll learn about the three types of goal setting.

Outcome Goals



Outcome goals are the type of goals that most people set for new years resolutions. They're often associated with 'dream goals' like: making a six figure income this year, finding the love of your life, to quit smoking once and for all, to shed the extra 25 pounds.

In the context of multisport training and racing, outcome goals are those goals which focus on the competitive result of an event. Examples might be: to win first place in your age group at a specific race; to win a medal at the Olympics; To beat your arch nemesis at the world championships.

Herein lies the number one mistake many people make in goal setting: *they create outcome goals.*

The biggest problem with these types of goals is that they are ultimately out of your control since the realization of them are based on factors outside of your control. What if you get a flat on the ride and lose time? What if the competition is tougher than you expected? What if you perform a personal best, but still fail to achieve your goal?

Outcome goals ultimately lead to increased levels of anxiety and decreased levels of self confidence. Outcome goals can provide you with some initial motivation, but they're best when used in combination with one of the other two types of goals.

Performance Goals



Performance goals are different from outcome goals in that they are a measure of how good you are at what you do. The focus of performance goals are on achieving standards independent of others.

Performance goals are much more flexible than outcome goals because *they are always within your control.*

Some examples of performance goals would be to run a 6-minute mile or to improve your transition times by 20 seconds. Performance goals are comparisons of your current performance with your own previous performances. If last season you ran a personal best of 6:09 for the mile and this season you want to run a 6:00 flat, it's not only a realistic goal, it's set against your previous performance so it's within your control.

In the event of the onset of injury or sickness, these types of goals can very quickly and easily be readjusted to provide more meaningful and realistic intermediate goals. Performance goals can and should be used in *both training and racing.*

Process Goals



The last type of goal is the process goal. Process goals focus on the actions that you must engage in during performance to perform well. For example: you might have a process goal of maintaining a smooth pedal stroke while climbing hills; or to stay lifted while running; or to focus on maintaining a long, stretched-out arm pull while swimming. Process goals have a positive effect on self-efficacy and self-confidence, so it's important to be sure you've integrated them into

your over all goal setting for the season.

Using a combination of all three types of goal setting has been shown to produce significantly better performances than just relying on one type of goal. In particular, performance and process goals can be very effectively used in combination. Use outcome goals sparingly, and place less importance on them.

THE 11 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GOAL SETTING

Now we're ready to discuss the 11 basic principles of effective goal setting.

Principle #1: Moderately Difficult But Realistic

Goals need to be difficult enough to challenge yourself, but realistic enough that they can be achieved. Using past race performances as a gauge really helps. My experience is that the majority of athletes will err on the side of one of the two extremes in goal setting, either too easy or too difficult. On the too easy side, are the athletes who say that their goal is 'just to have fun', they shy away from being specific with their goals and tend not to want to commit to any goal in particular. On the other extreme is the athlete who has only been racing for one or two years and who wants to complete an IM race in 12 hours. Now, this may be doable for someone who is young, free of injuries and naturally talented... but many of us are adult athletes in our late 30's, 40's or 50's. To have a goal this ambitious may be setting yourself up for a disastrous outcome including the potential for overtraining, burnout, injury and loss of motivation.

I ask my clients to give a subjective rating to their goal on a scale of 1-10 (1=extremely ez, 10=extremely difficult) if they fall somewhere between a 6-8, I consider it an appropriate goal. If they rate it a 1 or 2 (which some do), I work with them to create a more challenging goal.

Principle #2: Specific

This is the most basic principle of any goal setting whether it's to lose weight, make money or have a peak performance in competition. For goals to be effective, they must be stated in specific terms with measurable outcomes.

Principle #3: Self-Initiated

All goals must be internally initiated and driven. They must come from within as opposed to something that you think you should do or should be able to do. An example would be an athlete who decides to do a half IM race this year because all of her friends and training buddies are doing it. She figures, 'Well, I should just do it so that I have people to train with... besides all my friends are doing it and I don't want to be left out.'. This is a goal initiated from an external source: her group of friends. Ultimately, all goals need to be self-initiated, not influenced by friends, peers, your family or even your coach (if you're working with one) otherwise there won't be enough internal motivation to stay committed over the long run.

Principle #4: Commitment

We already discussed this as a *prerequisite* to goal setting, but it's so important that I want to mention it again. There absolutely must be an unshakeable commitment to attaining the goal. Commitment is an internal force that drives us to take action, and is essential for the initiation into action of the training and racing strategy.

Principle #5: Long And Short Term Goals

Focusing only on long term goals won't improve performance, and often long term goals can be overwhelming thereby leading to discouragement. Short term goals are an important component of goal setting and should be used to stair-step yourself toward your long term goal. Short term goals will help build your self confidence therefore supporting the belief that your long term goal is possible and ultimately keep you committed to your long term goal. Short term goals will also direct your focus on the smaller tasks that need to be completed and that will support the larger goal. (Did you notice that short term goals help to fulfill the three prerequisites of goal setting?)

Principle #6: Combines All Three Types Of Goals

We already discussed this. I just want to reiterate here that performance goals combined with process goals are the most effective.

Principle #7: Use In Practice And Competition.

You should always have goals both for practice and competition. Here's an example for how you might have both performance and process goals in practice and competition:

Training Goals

Performance	Run 10x 400 repeats at 90 sec for track workout this week
Process	Maintain high cadence during 400 repeats

Racing Goals

Performance	Run a 20:15 at the local 5k next month
Process	Stay relaxed though my shoulders, good arm swing, deep breathing

Principle #8: Specific Strategies For Achievement

Goals aren't effective unless you have specific and realistic strategies to achieve them. This is a biggie for those of you who are using online training programs or are training in a club setting. In each of these cases, you may have a general training plan that you're working with, but they very likely don't address your specific strategies for achieving goals.

It's my firm belief that a training plan isn't enough. Every athlete needs to have *both a physical training strategy as well as a mental training strategy to achieve their goal*. So let me give you an example: Say your goal is to have a good kick at the end of your race. Maybe you have a history of crashing during the last couple miles of the run. You need to have a training strategy to address this issue. We can refer to the previous example I gave above which addresses specific strategies to achieve the goal:

<u>Training Goals</u>	<u>Strategies</u>
Performance	Run 10x 400 repeats at 90 sec for track workout this week
Process	Maintain high cadence during 400 repeats
Mental	Identify my most dominant 'sabotage-thoughts', perform <i>dissociation technique</i> before each run this week

Now let's look at a mental training strategy for them as well. Maybe you've identified that they have a limiting belief or thought pattern that 'I always crash on the run'. You've just given in to this 'fact'. In this case, your strategy might be to use some specific mental techniques each day before you run so that you begin to build your belief muscles.

Principle #9: Feedback And Evaluation

This is an extremely important part of goal setting, and it's something that you'll need to get the support of a friend or coach to help you with. Without objective feedback and evaluation it's hard to tell what type of progress you're making toward your goals. Feedback and evaluation should be continually implemented throughout the season. If you have a coach, he or she should already be giving you specific feedback as to how you're progressing. If you don't have a coach, you might ask a trusted friend or workout buddy to give you objective feedback throughout the season. You can also get objective feedback from your workout logs which in which you've entered specific goals as well as training and race performances.

Principle #10: Provide Support

Trying to achieve big goals in training, racing or in life without support can be very difficult. Be sure that just as you have a friend or coach to provide you with feedback and evaluation, you also have someone who you can turn to for support in the achievement of your goal. This doesn't mean that you need to tell the world what your goal is. Contrary to traditional goal setting models which suggest that you claim your goal to everyone who will listen to you, I recommend being a bit more modest.

According to the 'Law of Attraction' principles for manifesting, it's important that you only tell those people who really believe in your ability to achieve your goals and who truly want to support you. This has to do with the fact that other peoples negative (even if it's subconscious) energy will affect your endeavor, especially if they are people who you think you can turn to for support.

Principle #11: Consider Your Personality And Level Of Motivation

You are a unique individual with your own personality and level of motivation. The famous adage, *Know Thyself*, couldn't be more appropriate when it comes to goal setting. Don't sign up for a marathon or an Ironman triathlon if you hate long events. Don't schedule yourself to swim with the 6am masters group if you're not a

morning person. This seems like common sense, but so many people set themselves up for failure by completely neglecting their personality and motivation levels. Instead, create training strategies that support your personality type.

A FINAL WORD (OR TWO) ABOUT EFFECTIVE GOAL SETTING

After applying the 11 principles of goal setting, you should be well on your way to achieving your training and racing dreams... However, I do need to make a disclaimer:

One aspect of goal setting that's not addressed by traditional models (as I mentioned in the introduction) is dealing with underlying limiting thoughts, beliefs and habit patterns that will ultimately sabotage any goal if they're not dealt with. This is a huge subject alone, which I could write an entire book on. In fact, I teach courses on this subject alone. If you're interested in more information about how to deal with those obstacles here are some resources that can help:

- 1) www.InnerStateCoaching.com My website has a growing resource library which you can access free information and ongoing programs and coaching.
- 2) www.EMOfree.com Emotional Freedom Techniques, perhaps the most powerful tool for eliminating limiting thoughts, beliefs and emotions (check out the video on my site under the tab 'EFT').
- 3) www.TheWork.com Byron Katies line of inquiry called 'The Work' is a great way to identify hidden self-sabotaging beliefs.

In health,

Lisa Engles