

Goal Setting

Information for patients

Goals give us motivation and direction. When deciding on goals, think of things you might have given up or do less due to your pain such as hobbies, work, or social activities. You may like to start something new.

Your goals should ideally be SMART:

Specific

- Give yourself a concrete aim, such as start swimming
- The most effective goals are those that you can describe easily, such as a walk on the beach, getting a job, taking the family on holiday. Emotional goals such as being happy or relaxed do make life worthwhile. However, these are usually the result of other things happening, such as having taken your family on holiday

Measurable

- For example, swimming six lengths a week

Achievable

- Things that you can achieve through your own efforts – perhaps not straight away but over time as your ability to manage your pain improves

Realistic

- Your goals should be appropriate for your age, physical condition, skills, situation. E.g. family, finances, work commitments, education etc)
- Your goals should be able to be achieved despite pain

Timely

- Aim to have a time-frame, such as swimming for six lengths twice a week within eight weeks. Do not leave your goals open-ended

More than one goal

- Having a number of goals to work on in different areas of your life gives you a chance to achieve more. If one goal doesn't work out, you still have others to work on
- Give yourself a mixture of long-term, medium-term and short-term goals
- Long-term goals take a while to achieve. E.g. to be able to sit long enough to watch a film at the cinema
- Short-term goals are achieved sooner and should help you achieve long-term goals. For example, to be able to sit long enough to watch an episode of your favourite 'soap opera'

How to work towards achieving a goal:

Decide on what you want to achieve. What are your general pain management aims?

- Get out more
- Reduce or stop painkillers
- Walk further
- Be less bored
- Be more independent
- Manage the children better

Decide on a specific goal to aim for, such as:

- Go out for a meal
- Walk to the shop without a stick
- Take the children to school
- Vacuum the living room

Break down the goal

- A long-term goal may be to walk to the shop without a stick
- First Step – What can I do now? Set a baseline. E.g. walk 10 minutes
- Next Step – walk 10 minutes every day
- Next Step – walk 11 minutes every day

Hints and tips

- Involve family and friends to make them aware of your aims; they can encourage and motivate you
- It doesn't matter how long it takes you to reach your goal
- Be flexible – you can modify your goals to slow down or speed up your progress as appropriate
- Fitness, stamina and confidence will improve all the time
- Each short-term goal be easily achieved before you move on; think of the goal setting process as a ladder to climb one rung at a time
- If you have a setback don't be discouraged, it's not unusual. Take a step back before moving on again
- If your goals are realistic, there is a good chance they are achievable with a slow and steady approach
- Reward yourself as you achieve your goals

This information is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please ask a member of staff.

Reviewed by Readers' Panel January 2019.