

SMART Goals

Goal Setting

Appropriate goal setting can be an important first step towards positive and sustainable behaviour change. SMART is an acronym for any goal that is **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime Framed. SMART goals have more likelihood of success than non-specific, non-measurable goals due to their considered and personal origins. This manual endorses the belief that the ability to set SMART goals can be learned and that their achievement is likely to improve self-efficacy and promote a sense of confidence amongst participants.

Specific

Goals should provide enough detail so that there is no uncertainty or ambiguity as to what the participants are intending to achieve. For example, a goal like 'reducing alcohol use' is too vague and difficult to measure. A better one could read 'only drink a maximum of 3 standard units per day, with no alcohol before 7:00pm'.

Measurable

Encouraging participants to start counting or measuring their drug use is often the first step in helping them introduce greater control. Explain to participants that it is important to include parameters (numbers, measurements, time, distance etc.) around goals in order to make them as specific as possible. In this way, the participant will be able to ascertain whether a goal was achieved or not. Goals should contain enough information so that they can be evaluated and any achievements acknowledged.

Achievable

Emphasise to participants that it is important to check that goals are within reach. Explain that it is here where people can look at the resources available to them to achieve their goals and assess whether they may need additional resources or assistance in order to assist them further in achieving their goals. For example, a person's goal may be to cut down their drug use from three ecstasy tablets to two every weekend. Looking at their resources they may see that they have one friend who is supportive of this decision, however, they may

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feel that they are not assertive enough to say “no” to other friends who may be a little pushy. Thus, some practice in being assertive will help this person achieve their goal.

Realistic

Check that goals are within context. It is better to start with a few small changes and be successful than try to introduce radical changes and fail. This is where planning “mini goals” are useful. This is where the participant will formulate the steps needed for them to achieve their goal. For example, a person’s goal may be to only smoke pot after 6.00pm. They have noticed in the past that by keeping themselves busy up until 6.00pm assists in achieving this goal. Therefore, some of the steps to achieving the goal may be to ring a friend and organise seeing them in the late afternoon, going for a walk in the late afternoon so that they are out of the house or to plan to do a hobby of some kind for distraction.

Time frame

This aspect defines how long the goal is intended for or the time frame within which it should be achieved.

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