

Resetting Goals

Goal setting can be an effective method to help motivate and gradually step people up to greater physical activity (Marcus & Forsyth, 2009). The self-regulation aspects of goal setting, reaching the goals, and self-evaluation are important to developing confidence, mastery, and a sense of accomplishment. However, goal resetting is equally important as there will be instances where despite much effort, the goal is not attainable perhaps due to unforeseen events. A "reset" is needed by which the individual needs to identify/recognize there is a problem, disengage from the unattainable goal, and reengage in a new goal (Wrosch, Scheier, & Miller, 2013).

Failure to recognize and disengage from a threatened goal may cause great undue psychological/emotional distress (e.g. depression) and physiological stress (e.g. sleep and appetite disturbance) (Wrosch et al., 2013). Using physical activity as an example, a person might give up and abandon/reject physical activity, closing them off to future well-meaning suggestions. If the person is unable to disengage, their pursuit of the threatened/unattainable goal may cause them physical harm or at the very least, put their health in jeopardy. Disengagement requires the individual to stop both their current behavioral efforts and psychological commitment pursuing the unattainable goal (Wrosch et al., 2013). Resetting requires the individual to identify a new goal, psychologically commit to the new goal, and begin their pursuit and efforts towards the new goal (Wrosch et al., 2013).

Setting and resetting goals is natural. The process requires resiliency, a quality uniquely different to each individual. The techniques of motivational interviewing may be helpful in guiding practitioners to open up meaningful dialogue with clients both in pursuit of goals and in need of goal resetting.

References

Marcus, B. H., & Forsyth, L. H. (2009). *Motivating people to be physically active*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Wrosch, C., Scheier, M. F., & Miller, G. E. (2013). [Goal adjustment capacities, subjective well-being, and physical health](#). *Social & Personality Psychology Compass*, 7(12), 847-860.