

HOW TO SET A SMART GOAL

“SMART” stands for Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic, and Timed. SMART goals are often featured in a Veteran’s Personal Health Plan (PHP). To write one, begin by focusing on a goal that is important to a Veteran. This goal should tie in to what really matters to them and closely rates to their Mission, Aspiration, Purpose (MAP).

After you have a general goal in mind, apply the principles of SMART goals to focus in on how to reach it. These are featured in the table below. As you help someone set a goal, remember the following:

- It is better to break a general goal down into smaller goals that are easier to reach, in order to increase the odds of success.
- The more detail the better. “I will exercise more” is very vague. “Starting on Monday, July 1, I will walk in the mall for 20 minutes and keep doing that every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday” is more detailed and incorporates all of the SMART elements.
- Make sure both you and the Veteran agree (at least to some degree) about the goal. Shared goal setting is a powerful process. Explain your reasoning.
- Don’t forget to follow up later to see how it is going with reaching the goal. If they are stalled out, is it best to change goals, or simplify it somehow?
- Table 1 is designed to help you take a Veteran through this process.

PUTTING THE SMART IN GOAL SETTING

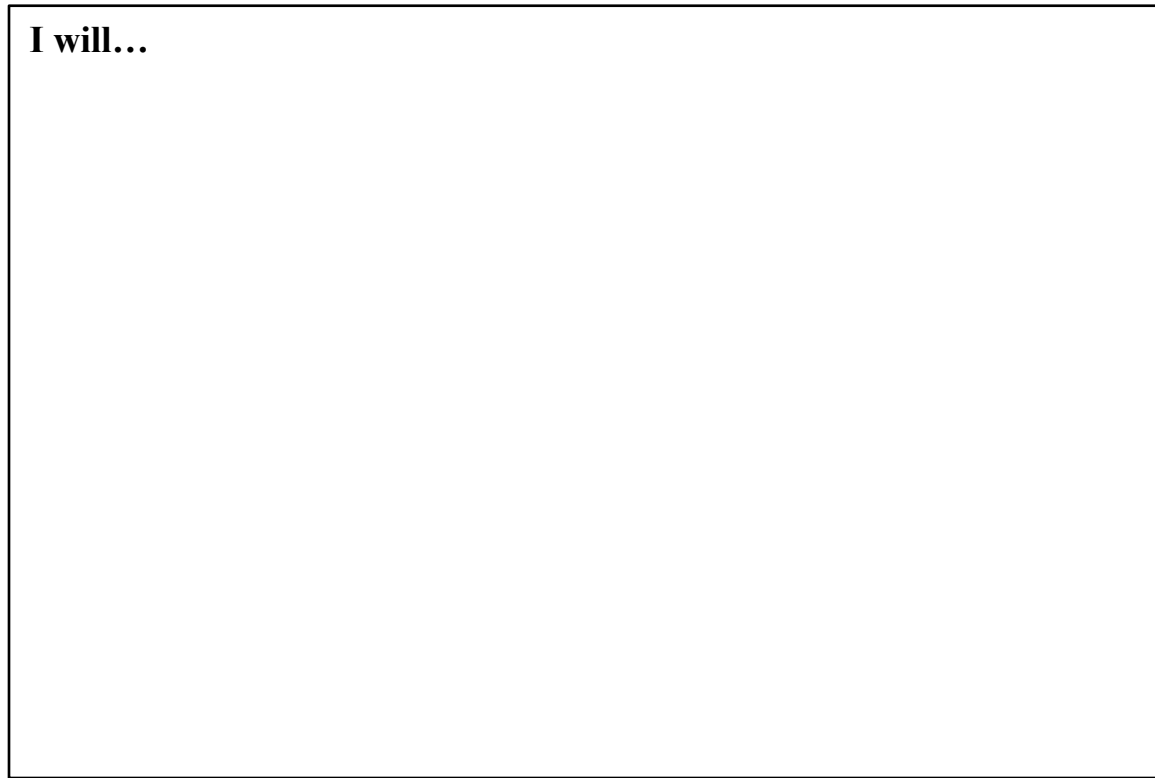
SMART Goal Element	Questions to Consider	Your Notes
Specific S	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be very clear and detailed about what you want to do and why.• What is required? What are the challenges?• What are your assets and resources?	

How to Write a SMART Goal

SMART Goal Element	Questions to Consider	Your Notes
Measurable <p style="text-align: center;">M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time will you spend? • How often (daily, weekly, monthly)? • How will you know you are making progress? • How will you know you have reached your goal? 	
Action-Oriented <p style="text-align: center;">A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What actions are needed to achieve the goal? • Describe the ones you will be taking. 	
Realistic <p style="text-align: center;">R</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this goal worth it? • Does the goal line up with your values? • Is the timing right? • Do you have what you need to reach the goal? • Is it really doable? 	
Timed <p style="text-align: center;">T</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long do you need? • Are there any deadlines you have to meet? • When will you start? 	

WRITE YOUR GOAL BELOW:

I will...



This exercise was adapted from: Rollnick S, Miller W, Butler C. Motivational Interviewing in Health Care: Helping Patients Change Behavior. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2008.

Once you finish this exercise, ask yourself the following:

- How do you make the person setting the goal more accountable? Can you call them, or have a team member do so? Is there a way to involve a friend or family member to help them?
- How can you or your team help them to succeed?
- Is it possible to involve a Whole Health Coach or Peer Partner who can support them?

AUTHOR(S)

“How to Set a SMART Goal” was written by [J. Adam Rindfleisch](#), MPhil, MD (2014, updated 2017).

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