

## HANDOUT

## Create a Goal and Find Your “Why”

**Step 1: Create a Personal Goal:** *What’s a personal goal you want to achieve by the end of the school year?* Write your response in the box below. You will not be required to share your goal with your peers. Your goal may be related to one of the following categories:

- **Positive Choices:** Make choices that have a positive impact on others and the school community.
- **Belonging and Inclusion:** Expand your sense of belonging or build others’ sense of belonging.
- **Wellness:** Advance your physical and mental wellness, including managing your emotions, eating nutritiously, and/or getting sufficient sleep (at least 7 hours a night).
- **Academic:** Improve on your performance or participation in class
- **Extracurricular:** Engage in activities outside the classroom, such as sports, clubs, or student government.

If you need help thinking of a goal, reflect on the following questions:

- What is something you want to gain from this year?
- What is something that you want to change from last year?
- Is there anything new you’d like to start doing?
- Which category do you feel needs the most improvement? Why?
- Is there anything specific you’d like to achieve this year?

*What’s a personal goal you want to achieve by the end of the school year?* Write your response in the box below using the sentence frame.

By the end of the year, I want \_\_\_\_\_.  
(ex: *by the end of the year, I want to study five hours a week*)

**Step 2: Revise Goal, Make it Specific and Relevant:** Next, you will revise your goal to ensure it is relevant and specific.

According to research<sup>1</sup>, you're more likely to achieve a goal if it is meaningful, or relevant, to you. To determine if your goal is "relevant", reflect on this question: *is your goal based on your own expectations for yourself, or the expectations that others place on you?* If you made a goal based on what other people expect of you, take a moment to revise your goal to make it more relevant to what you expect of yourself.

Research also shows that people are more likely to achieve specific goals.<sup>2</sup> You can make a goal more specific by including numerical values. For example,

**Original Goal:** I want to improve my GPA.

**Revised Goal:** I want to improve my GPA from 2.0 to 3.0.

You can also make a goal more specific by including additional details that include when, how, and where. For example,

**Original Goal:** I want to exercise more.

**Revised Goal:** I want to lift weights 5 times a week at the gym after dinner.

Revise your goal to make it more specific and realistic.

---

<sup>1</sup> Locke, E. A., Shaw, K. N., Saari, L. M., & Latham, G. P., "Goal setting and task performance: 1969–1980," *Psychological Bulletin*, 90.1 (1981): 125–152. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.90.1.125>.

<sup>2</sup> Arvey, R. D., Dewhirst, H. D., & Boling, J. C. "Relationships between goal clarity, participation in goal setting, and personality characteristics on job satisfaction in a scientific organization" *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 61.1 (1976): 103–105. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.61.1.103>.

By the end of the year, I want \_\_\_\_\_.

*(ex: by the end of the year, I want to study five hours a week)*

**Step 3: Ask “Why”:** Next, you will write a short reflection to help you discover what is motivating you to pursue this goal. Some people call this motivation their “why” behind their goal. You will not be required to share your response.

*Why do you want to achieve this goal?* Use the sentence frame to structure your response in the box below.

I want \_\_\_\_\_, because I want \_\_\_\_\_.

*(ex: I want to study five hours a week because I want better grades)*

**Step 4: Continue Asking “Why”:** In this step, you will continue asking yourself “why.” Use the “because” statement in the second half of our previous reflection and ask yourself “why” again. For example if you wrote “I want to study five hours a week *because I want better grades,*” ask yourself “*Why do I want better grades,*” and use the sentence frame to structure your response in the box below.

I want \_\_\_\_\_, because I want \_\_\_\_\_.

*(ex: I want better grades because I want to get accepted to a university)*

**Step 5: Discover Your True “Why”:** Continue asking yourself “why” for as many times as you feel necessary for the next two minutes. It’s okay if you get stuck, or if you feel you’ve found your “why” before the two minutes have passed. The goal is to find your true “why.” Be sure to use the sentence frame to structure your response.

I want \_\_\_\_\_, because I want \_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 6: Identity Reflection, Who Will You Become?**

Identifying your “why” is an important step to achieving your goals. In this last step, you will extend your reflection by considering the relationship between your goal, your identity, and the type of person you envision yourself becoming.

- 1. How does your goal or “why” relate to who you are (your identity) and the person you’d like to become? Why?

2. Think about the type of person you need to become in order to achieve your goal. What does this type of person

- Believe
- Value
- Care about
- Regularly do

3. What's a small change you can make in the next week to help you grow into your vision of yourself? The purpose of this reflection is to prove to yourself you can achieve your goal with small wins.

4. Sharing your goal with somebody you respect can help keep you accountable and more likely to achieve your goal. Think of somebody with whom you would like to share your goal and explain why you chose them.