

# **skilful goal setting – ACT WISeST**

**best of both worlds:** There are effective ways to set goals that make it considerably more likely that participants will achieve the goals. There are healthy ways to set goals that increase the chances that participants will feel good as they work. Happily it is entirely possible – and in fact highly desirable – to set goals in ways that get the best of both worlds, promoting both effectiveness and well-being at the same time. The acronym ACT WISeST highlights important areas to focus on in this skilful goal setting.

**action points:** Getting the first 3 areas right – *ability, control & time factors* – increases success expectation and reduces participant levels of anxiety, depression, hostility & fatigue. Getting the next 5 areas right – *wanted, integrated, specific, stretching & talked about* – increases participant valuing of the goals and levels of vitality & well-being. All 8 areas increase goal commitment.

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**A** *Ability:* the participants' skills, knowledge & experience in working with this kind of goal.

**C** *Control:* this is a key area – in relation to the goal, do participants feel they are in command of the situation rather than powerless, in control rather than helpless?

**T** *Time factors:* whether or not there is a realistic amount of time to achieve the goal, rather than having to face unreasonable deadlines.

*ACT reduces poor mood & boosts success expectation, as well as commitment.*

**W** *Wanted:* this is a key area – do the participants feel that they selected the goal for themselves? Did they choose the goal rather than having it imposed on them?

**I** *Integrated:* does the goal fit in well with the participants' other goals or are there clashes, contradictions or conflicts?

**S** *Specific:* again a key area – is the goal clearly defined rather than vague or ambiguous? This is likely to mean setting goals that are measurable & within an agreed time frame.

**e** *WISeST improves good mood & boosts goal valuing, as well as commitment.*

**S** *Stretching:* goals that are fairly challenging – rather than too simple – tend to encourage more engagement.

**T** *Talked about:* on the whole, making goals public so that it is widely known that the participants have the goal, tends to increase energy and commitment.

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Ingledeu, D. K. et al. (2005). "Work-related goal perceptions and affective well-being." *J Health Psychol* 10: 101-22.

The aim was to clarify how perceptions of work-related goals influence affective well-being and goal commitment. Participants (N = 201) completed a Goal Perceptions Questionnaire and affect scales. A model was refined using structural equation modelling. Value and success expectation substantially mediated the effects of other goal perceptions on affects and commitment. Both value and success expectation increased commitment, but whereas value increased positive affects, success expectation reduced negative affects. The determinants of value (e.g. personal origin) were different from those of success expectation (e.g. personal control). Through astute goal setting, it is possible to promote well-being without compromising commitment.

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