As we leave behind 2020 and move into 2021 many of us are looking forward to a new year. Moving into any new year is often about change.

When it comes to successful change, planning is everything. As the famous Benjamin Franklin saying goes “failing to plan is like planning to fail”. This year start your year off right by spending time mapping out your goals and vision for 2021.

I am in the business of behavior change. Everyday I hear people’s desires to change. I hear things like

“I want to be more healthy”

“I want my relationships to be better”

“I want to make more money”

These are great goals, however they are too vague. When you read them, what the heck do they mean? We have no way of knowing because we do not have an objective way to measure them. When setting goals it is important to make them specific and measurable. It helps to make sure your goals are achievable, relevant, and have a time limit, too.

As you decide which goals you want to crush in 2021 use the S.M.A.R.T goal setting technique. This technique, coined by George Duran, Arthur Miller, and James Cunningham in 1981 and based on Peter Drucker’s *Management by Objectives* 1955 concept, is about making your goals

* **S**pecific
* **M**easurable
* **A**chievable
* **R**ealistic & Relevant
* **T**ime - Sensitive

**For example a SMART weight loss goal could be:** I will lose 40 lbs by July 1, 2021 (approx 2lbs / week). I will hire a personal trainer and nutrition coach to help make sure I am accountable and stay on track.

This meets the SMART criteria.

It is **specific** - we know how much we are going to lose and can weigh ourselves now to make sure we have a baseline to work from.

It is **measurable, achievable, and realistic/relevant** - we know we are aiming for 2 lbs per week and willing to make the commitment to hire help to reach this goal. From an exercise science perspective, losing 1-2 lbs per week is healthy and creates lifestyle change over time. However, 2 lbs per week is ambitious, hiring a trainer and nutrition coach helps make sure the goal is truly realistic and we are accountable. We can work with our coach to make sure the goal stays relevant for us and we will have support if we need to shift our focus while in process.

Finally, we gave ourselves a **time stamp**. The end date is outlined in our goal statement.

Putting all 5 steps together are a sure way to set yourself up for success in 2021.

Once you get the goals outlined it is important to examine potential obstacles and create plans to get around them. Remember, getting off track is normal. It is not a sign of failure. Success is really measured by how quickly you get back on the path. You will be faster getting back on track if you have a plan for when you fall off.

Humans really get things done when there is “necessity”. Necessity is about accountability. To make sure you are successful, build in necessity and find a way to be accountable. Some of us are good being accountable to ourselves. Others need to be accountable to someone else. A coach, friend, or family member can be helpful here. Just make sure if you are picking family and friends that they will really hold you accountable. I like to hire a coach because they can be more objective and really hold me to my goals. My family and friends, albeit well-meaning, often aren’t as strong when holding me accountable.

You’ll also want to vision your goal. The human brain is wired to “see” where we are headed. When you create a vision for your goal you are more likely to complete it. Many people like to use pictures or create a drawing to represent goals. This can be done with pen and paper or digital. Many cut apart magazine photos, snapshots they’ve taken, use apps like Pinterest or an online photo album to curate visual expressions of the goals they want to accomplish. From a somatic psychology perspective, visioning works because your body and brain go through physiological processes when you think about the action you want to do. This is why elite athletes spend time meditating on athletic goals. They “see” themselves accomplish the shot, win the race, sink the ball long before they ever get on the competition field to hack the bodymind system for success. You can do that too by focusing on your goal vision boards often.

As we start 2021, make sure you are set up for a successful year. Crush your goals by creating SMART goals, planning for your obstacles, building necessity, and creating a vision to remind you to “see” your completed goal in one form or another.

By taking these steps you’ll be ahead of most people who say they want things to change. You’ll actually be taking the action steps that start changes. With your plan you’ll be ready to break the goal statement into actionable daily steps. Long-term change rarely happens all at once, it is most successful in small steps done consistently over time.

Here’s to a happy new year and crushing your goals in 2021! Happy New Year.

If you are wondering where to start when it comes to setting goals, knowing yourself well enough to ask for the right kind of help, and learning how to outline strategy to be successful - then consider applying for the next LLP class (<http://www.leadershiplaplata.org/index.cfm/apply-for-leadership-la-plata/>) . Applications are due May 2021 and the next Leadership La Plata class starts in September 2021.