

# LECTURE 8

# Goal Setting

By Cathal Fanning

- **Goal Setting**
- **SMART Goals**
- **Periodisation**
- **Further Considerations**

# Goal Setting

So...we have come to the part of the course in which we will discuss the early stages of exercise planning. We have completed the consultation process, and have administered all of the necessary static and dynamic fitness assessments to inform us of the current state of the client's health, movement and posture. We have gained knowledge of their aspirations, but we need to formulate these into goals that can be quantifiable, so that we can measure their progress.



## Aspirations

More often than not, a client's goals will be rather vague. They may want to 'get a bit fitter' or wish to 'lose a bit of weight'.

The term 'fit' for example relates to so many different variables, and evokes different images in almost everyone's minds. As a goal it is far too wishy-washy for the PT to get a firm grasp on what the client wants to achieve. This is a start point for further questions in the planning stages of your programme.

Aspirations are an excellent conversation to have with your client as you can use them to identify exactly **what they really want to achieve, and what a successful outcome looks like for them.**



# SMART Goals

We have touched on SMART goals in other lectures but we're going to examine them in more detail here...

A SMART goal is a structured target for the client to achieve. It should be **S**pecific in nature so that it is clear to all parties what exactly they are trying to achieve. It must be **M**easurable because if you cannot measure it then it becomes very difficult to know when it has been reached. The terms **A**chievable, and **T**imed are closely linked to each other. For example, if we create a goal for a client of 10lbs weight-loss, it is impossible to say if it is achievable if we do not put a deadline on it. 10lbs weight lost in a 1-week period is not achievable, whereas 10lbs can be lost in a 12-week period. **R**ealistic speaks to the client's specific circumstances. For example, it is unrealistic for a client who hasn't much spare time, to attend the gym 5-days-a-week, so if they have an attendance goal, it needs to suit their availability.

## What Are Some of The Benefits of Goal-Setting?

- Sense of achievement.
- Enhanced motivation.
- Getting the client to 'buy-in'.
- Long-term approach.

So what are the things we need to consider when starting the process of goal-setting? Firstly let's look at...

## Goal Types...

- **Performance** – 'I want to complete a 10km run in less than 50-minutes by Month 2', or 'I want to be able to perform a set of 5 pull-ups by the end of the month'.
- **Process** – 'I want to achieve greater squat depth, so I need to perform stretching exercises for my quads, hamstrings and calves twice per week over the first month'
- **Outcome** – 'I want to complete a marathon by the end of the next 12-months of training'

## Let's Look at SMART Goals Again



# Periodisation

## How to fit goals into an overall training plan...

With both beginner and experienced clients, you can plan their goals loosely around a **periodised** plan... See below as we set the client's **microcycle**, **mesocycle** and **macrocycle** around their goals.

### Microcycle



This time is typically a fairly short-term part of the overall training plan. Depending on the duration of this, you could spend this time on having the client focus on all of the behaviours they need to amend (as stated earlier) to support their success. Creating sound habits to support the goals is important in the early stages.

### Mesocycles



The actual short and medium term goals might fit neatly into each mesocycle of the client's periodised plan. For example, if they have a weight-loss-based goal you could split this into smaller targets aligned realistically to each mesocycle of the plan. This will hopefully build in continued motivation based on achievement.

## Macrocycles



The macrocycle should be based on the long-term overall goal the client has set. For example, if this is to run a marathon after 12 months of training you can set the macrocycle to fit this and then work backwards to set short and medium term goals to suit. There may be lots of additional changes and strategies that fit into this timeframe, such as recovery sessions etc.

Periodisation is dealt with in greater detail in Lecture 12 of this series.

# Further Considerations

## Setting A Plan

The next step is to focus on all the behaviours that the client needs to focus on in order to make sure they can achieve the goals set out. You might have three goals, short, medium and long term, outlined to your client, have their agreement and deadlines in place, yet now there are other things that need to be discussed to ensure these can happen.

## Creating A Habit

For the sake of this example let's assume you have created a short-term adherence goal for your client, to attend the gym three times a week over the first month. What do they need to do to support this...?

- Get up earlier in the morning to train?
- Pack their gym kit into the car so they can go after work?
- Book their space in a class?

What about if the goal was a weight-loss goal, perhaps **losing 10lbs in the next three months**. In this instance they may need to...

- Change the foods they purchase on their weekly shop.
- Pack a lunch for work instead of eating in the canteen if there are no healthy choices.
- Consider other lifestyle changes they can make such as riding their bike to work to increase their calorie deficit.

## Make Goals Hold Value

The goal should be within the reach of the client but should be difficult enough that its achievement holds significant value. You want the goals to be achievable but there should be some challenge in order that there is some sense of achievement associated with them.

## Empowerment

The achievement of a goal should be closely linked to the client's efforts, rather than your own. Achievement that is attributable to the client will generate a sense of empowerment and hopefully enable the client to gain further motivation.

## Measure Achievements

You should be able to measure the achievement of the goals you set, otherwise it is hard to know if you are progressing. If someone says they want to 'get fitter', it is easy for us to move on too quickly without gaining clarity on what this means to the client - it could relate to a weight-loss target they have, or be centred around completing their first 10km race. We must be able to measure their progress somehow.

## Deadlines

Goals without definitive deadlines are still goals, but there is less incentive to actually achieve them. By working towards a deadline, there is a built-in sense of urgency, as well as making the client accountable.

## Rewards

'Seed-like' bones offer a stability and friction-free movement at a joint with a wide range of motion. The patella in the knee of a good example. It sits within the tendon to offer protection to a joint.

# Reviewing Progress & Changing Sessions

As a personal trainer, it is important for us to regularly monitor and review our clients' progress. This doesn't always require additional fitness testing but may take place more informally during their sessions. For example, if you are doing squats with the client it is worth recognising what they are currently doing compared to when they first started. This will build in a sense of achievement, continued motivation and allows you to celebrate their successes. It also allows you to ensure that they are progressing towards their goals, and to offer any amendments to their training required.

If the client is showing really good progression, you might realign their goals to represent this. Equally, you might reassess what they are likely to achieve based on current results if they are not quite progressing how you predicted. You could discuss possible reasons for this and help to problem-solve to ensure better progression.

- Encourage your clients to take ownership of their goals.
- Recording the goals offers a sense of clarity.
- Set a review date in advance. This can help with adherence.
- Identify the client's needs so you can offer better support.
- Think about what other guidance, products, services or strategies your clients need to ensure their success.

