



The Mind Hub

By



Topic: Goal Setting, Motivation & Healthy Habits

The start of a new school year is seen as a fresh start, a time to reflect on the past year and think about positive changes we would like to make. Students, parents, and teachers alike may set goals related to academics, wellbeing, relationships, or personal growth.

While goals can be motivating, it is important to remember that meaningful change rarely happens overnight. Small, consistent steps are usually more effective than dramatic resolutions that are difficult to maintain. This month, we explore how realistic goal setting can support children's wellbeing, confidence, and success at school.

What is Goal Setting?

Goal setting is the process of identifying something we would like to achieve and creating a plan to work towards it.

Academic

- Improving reading skills
- Completing homework on time
- Becoming more organised

Social

- Making a new friend
- Joining a new activity
- Improving communication skills

Personal

- Getting enough sleep
- Exercising regularly

- Managing emotions more effectively

Effective goals usually are SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-bound

For example, instead of: I want to do better in school.

Try: I will spend 20 minutes reading over my notes 3 times per week.

Why Goal Setting Matters

Research consistently shows that goal setting can help children and teens:

- Increase motivation: when students have a clear target, they often feel more focused and purposeful
- Build confidence: achieving small goals creates a sense of accomplishment and self-belief
- Improve self-regulation: children learn to plan, monitor progress, and adjust their efforts when necessary
- Develop resilience: working toward goals teaches perseverance and helps students cope with setbacks
- Strengthen wellbeing: progress toward meaningful goals can increase feelings of competence and satisfaction

Common Challenges

Many students struggle with goals because they:

- Set goals that are too large
- Expect immediate success
- Compare themselves to others
- Focus only on outcomes rather than effort
- Become discouraged after setbacks

Adults can help by emphasising progress over perfection. Remember: setbacks are a normal part of learning.

Tips for supporting children

1. Focus on small steps: large goals can feel overwhelming. Break goals into manageable actions that can be completed daily or weekly.
2. Praise effort: instead of focusing only on results, acknowledge persistence, practice, and hard work.
3. Encourage reflection: ask what went well, what was challenging, what would you do differently next time.
4. Model healthy goal setting: children learn from observing adults. Share your own realistic goals and challenges.
5. Celebrate progress: even small achievements deserve recognition. Progress is more important than perfection.

❖ FAQs

1. *Q. How many goals should a child have at one time?*

A. Generally, one to three meaningful goals are easier to manage than many different goals. Too many goals can become overwhelming and reduce motivation.

2. *Q. What should I do if my child loses motivation?*

A. This is normal. Review whether the goal is realistic, meaningful, and manageable. Sometimes goals need to be adjusted or broken into smaller steps.

3. *Q. Is it okay if children fail to meet a goal?*

A. Absolutely. Goals provide opportunities for learning. Discuss what worked, what didn't work, and how the plan can be improved.

4. *Q. Should rewards be used?*

A. Rewards can sometimes help initiate new habits, but long-term motivation develops when children find personal meaning and satisfaction in their achievements.

5. *Q. How can schools support goal setting?*

A. Schools can encourage students to reflect on strengths, identify realistic goals, monitor progress and celebrate growth throughout the year.

Final Thoughts

A new year offers an opportunity to reflect, learn, and grow. Whether goals relate to academics, friendships, emotional wellbeing, or personal development, the most important factor is not perfection, but consistency.

By helping children set realistic goals, celebrate progress, and learn from setbacks, we support the development of skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Let's make this academic year one of growth, resilience, and positive change, one small step at a time.

Wishing all students, families, and staff a happy, healthy, and successful year ahead.

If you have any concerns about your child's stress levels or would like further resources, don't hesitate to reach out to the school psychologist.

- The Mind Hub, by Marina Stavrou

