



Worksheet

Long-Term Mental Health Goals

peachey

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Setting mental health goals is a great way to prioritize your health and well-being. It allows you to move forward and build the life you want for yourself. If you're looking for some practical steps for creating and working on your mental health goals, this worksheet can help get you started.

The purpose of this worksheet is to:

- To introduce you to the process for setting mental health goals
- To provide you examples of mental health goals to consider in the context of your own life
- To help you learn how to create and maintain your own mental health goals according to your own needs and circumstances

Instructions

Print off this worksheet or grab yourself a journal or notebook and reflect and answer the questions provided to create your own long-term mental health goals.

How do you set mental health goals?

1. Identify your why

Before considering your mental health goals, it is important to consider the WHY. Your why should be the foundation of your personal and value-based goals.

If this is your first time doing value-based work, start by writing down your broader goals. There is no wrong way of doing this. Think as big as you want, and it's okay if the goals scare you.

After listing the goals, write down all the values that are important to you. The easiest way to do this is to google 'list of personal values' and print out the sheet. From there, you can either circle or highlight words that speak to you. Don't spend too much time finding the PERFECT values; it does not exist. Also, your values will change as you evolve.

2. Set S-M-A-R-T goals

Now that you know the why behind your goals, it is time to turn them into SMART goals.

SMART Goals are a great way to keep yourself accountable and have clarity around your goals. The SMART acronym stands for "**Specific**," "**Measurable**," "**Attainable**" (or Achievable), "**Reasonable**" (or Relevant), and "**Time-bound**."

SPECIFIC: Who is involved? What do I want to achieve? When do I need to achieve this? Why is this goal important?

MEASURABLE: How will I measure my success? How will I know if my goal is achieved?

ACHIEVABLE: Will it be clear when the goal is complete? Is it reasonable to complete goal in the time allotted?

RELEVANT: Is this goal related to my overall success?

TIME-BOUND: How long should it take to complete this goal? When will I check in on whether or not the goal has been completed?

3. Plan weekly mental health goals

It is easier to feel motivated during the start of a new year- the endless possibilities. However, as the year progresses, you might need more inspiration. A way to ensure you are still focused on your goals and planning effectively is to engage in weekly planning and goal setting.

You want to have a clear idea of your long-term mental health goals, but to keep working towards them, you need to make them into small manageable goals. Weekly planning lets you know your priorities keeping you on track, and hitting weekly goals will increase your sense of achievement.

To set and achieve weekly goals, pick a day of the week to plan. Then, think about ways to support your mental health during the week. Finally, remember your long-term mental health goals when thinking about these weekly goals.

As you continue developing the habit of weekly planning, challenge yourself to add an end-of-week ritual to reflect on your goals. Taking time to engage in weekly reflections is an easy way to check your mental health by reflecting on your wins, challenges, and progress during the week.

5 Long-term mental health goals to set

1. Address unmet needs

If you were raised in a dysfunctional family, ‘the reparenting process’ allows and involves reflecting on your unmet needs in childhood and giving your adult self what you did not receive as a child. Reparenting work can be done with a trained therapist or on your own.

Addressing these unmet needs allows you to change the narrative of your life and live a happier life by finding yourself, learning and understanding your patterns, self-acceptance, and changing behaviors that are in your best self-interest.

Think of reparenting as the broader goal that encompasses all the other goals listed- emotion regulation, self-care, habits and routines, embracing hobbies and passions, therapy, and self-compassion.

REFLECT: What did you need as a child growing up that you didn't receive? How does that impact your present life?

2. Prioritize self-care and stress management

Everyone experiences stress in their life. Our lives are constantly moving and changing. You can proactively control some stressors, while some may be unavoidable. We all experience stress uniquely, and learning how to cope with your stressors healthily is an important life skill.

Chronic stress has many negative impacts on your health. The goal is not to remove all stress from your life because stress can have benefits when managed effectively.

The goal is to do your best to remove unnecessary stressors from your life and learn how to cope with the rest by practicing prevention strategies like self-care, prioritizing rest, boundary setting with others and yourself, etc., as well as engaging in stress relief exercises like movement, therapy, journaling, etc.

REFLECT: How do you know you are stressed and what do you want to do to manage your stress levels?

3. Learning healthy emotional regulation

Growing up, if you frequently repressed your emotions or if only certain emotions were allowed in the house, you may find it challenging to cope with your feelings in a healthy way as an adult.

There is a need for self-trust when acknowledging, feeling, and expressing your emotions. Growing up, if certain emotions were not allowed in the house, it translated to 'this feeling is not okay,' and expressing it might have meant experiencing consequences like shame, guilt, and violence. As a result, as an adult, you may continue to repress and distract yourself- repeating similar patterns.

Your parents or caregivers might have openly expressed their more significant emotions and coped in an unhealthy way (alcohol, drugs, violence). However, that same emotion wasn't okay for you to express- and you may now find yourself coping in the same unhealthy ways.

Paying attention to your emotions, sitting with them, and constructively processing them to understand where 'unhealthy' habits come from can allow you to learn how express your emotions and cope in healthier ways. This is a long-term goal you can continually work towards.

REFLECT: What are the most common emotions you remember being expressed? How were they expressed? What feelings did you not feel safe expressing? Why? How do you currently express your emotions?

4. Build, maintain and repair relationships

Building and maintaining relationships takes work and commitment. But, like any other area needing nurturing, your relationships need to be nurtured. The core foundations of a relationship are the ability to identify each other's needs, trust and respect, spend quality time, boundary setting, and healthy communication.

Parents and family are the first templates for seeing and approaching relationships. Most people raised in a dysfunctional family might see dysfunctional patterns, abuse, neglect, etc., and consider this normal because that is what they grew up with.

Your attachment to your parents and caretakers influences your attachment to other relationships in your life- it creates your attachment style. Therefore, it is important to take some time to self-reflect on your behaviors and understand how you show up for your relationships, so you are not unconsciously repeating the same patterns.

REFLECT: What kind of feelings do you have about your relationship with your parents? What kind of feelings do you have about your current relationships? What would you like to change?

5. Continuous self-discovery

Getting to know yourself is a lifelong journey. Self-discovery is a process that allows you to build a connection with yourself. It enables you to learn about your needs, wants, values, goals and aspirations, and feelings, which require awareness.

Self-awareness refers to your knowledge of your feelings, beliefs, and aspirations. The more self-awareness you have, the better you can identify, manage, and regulate your emotions, improve stress management, engage in behavior change, and live the life you want for yourself.

REFLECT: Do you know who you are, really?