

Celebrating the Small Wins: A Strategy Toward Your Bigger Goals

Let's approach goal setting a little differently as this new year begins. Instead of making goals feel overwhelming or negative, take control of the narrative and use mini-goals to get things done! Each new year allows us to reflect on the one we've just had. What are some things you are glad you did, accomplishments you achieved, things you learned from, things you saw others do and thought, "Wow, it would be cool to do that"? Consider what fulfills you and makes you feel good. Consider what stresses you out and small steps to take in order to stop or lessen the frequency. It can be amazing to write out mini-goals to accomplish throughout the year and tie them (literally) to a treat.

We all know why goal setting is important. This how-to focuses on finding some joy in the small steps along the way!



The How-To

This is not the SMART goal setting you are used to at work. These goals don't have to be measurable and timebound, but they should definitely be specific and attainable. Think of some things you have always wanted to do and things you have been avoiding but really want to cross off the list.

Remember when you moved and stuffed a few random boxes in that closet, which you have not looked at since? These mini-achievements could be as simple as cleaning out that closet or the junk drawer in the kitchen that irks you but you never quite get to. Have you been meaning to clean up your files on your work laptop or finally put together a procedural document that will make your life easier but take up precious time? These are all great examples of small wins that are achievable and won't take all year to complete.

You can tie your goals to whatever item or experience will motivate you. What makes you happy or feels good, is fun—that is your treat.

It is helpful when your treat is something tangible that you can keep in your home—something you can see as a reminder of what you are working toward. It can also be something that symbolizes your treat if an experience is more up your alley.

Accountability

Sharing your goals with others increases accountability and motivation. These others can be colleagues, family, friends or all of the above! Start with a small group of 4–5 people. You want this group to be people that will cheer you on and understand the intent and that you feel comfortable sharing your wins with or trust to share your shortcomings. According to research by the American Society for Training and Development, individuals increase their chances of achieving a goal to 65% simply by committing it to someone—and up to 95% when they establish regular accountability check-ins.

Make sure you and your accountability buddies are checking in on each other. Start a text thread, WhatsApp or Snapchat group. Share your progress! Send a selfie of that 6 a.m. workout, share the latest title you are reading, send a before and after of the closet you organized and, most importantly, share when you achieve the goal—you want the celebratory pics! Not only does it feel really good, but healthy competition will also motivate your crew to want to get to their TREAT and be celebrated along with you.

Evolve your smalls to bigs

Connect these achievable small celebrations to larger goals.

Think about your bigger or long-term goals. What incremental steps will help you get there? What small wins will help you on that path? Maybe you want to be a keynote presenter someday, but that day may be a few years away. Think about the steps that will help you get there. Publish an article on an interesting topic, present internally to your team or business unit or do a mock presentation at home for friends. It could be as simple as submitting your idea or applying to present at a conference. Any of these things can be your small win to get to your bigger goal. Do you want to learn a new language? Your mini-goal could be to sign up for a service like Babbel or Duolingo and complete 10 lessons. Run a half marathon and start by completing a couch-to-5k plan.

As mentioned earlier, not all of these wins have to be life-changing—sometimes you need to just cross some tasks off that mental list. You’re in luck! Here is a list of sample ideas to get you started.

<i>Read 10 books (read 100 books)</i>	<i>Complete 100 workouts</i>
<i>Do 5 pull-ups</i>	<i>Publish an article (RISE can help here!)</i>
<i>Clean out the hall closet</i>	<i>Get X certification (PSMP, PSP, CPP)</i>
<i>Close your first deal</i>	<i>Summit 14,000 feet</i>
<i>Sing karaoke in public</i>	<i>Organize the shelves in the garage</i>
<i>Schedule a coffee talk with a senior leader</i>	<i>Try 5 new recipes</i>
<i>Shoot under 100 in golf</i>	<i>Start drum lessons</i>
<i>Run a 5k, 10k or half marathon</i>	<i>Give blood 2, 6 or 10 times</i>
<i>Learn a new language</i>	<i>Reach \$1,000 or \$5,000 in savings</i>
<i>Volunteer four times</i>	<i>Finish your wedding checklist</i>
<i>Make 50 new connections on LinkedIn</i>	<i>Ask for help when overwhelmed</i>
<i>Rearrange your home office</i>	<i>Visit another city, state, country or continent</i>
<i>Do your expense reports on time</i>	<i>Work on your posture</i>
<i>Create a compliments folder for yourself</i>	<i>Paint the hallway</i>
<i>Volunteer for a stretch assignment</i>	<i>Max your 401(k)</i>
<i>Use all of the gift cards in your junk drawer</i>	<i>Prepare for your mid-year review</i>

All of these can be adjusted to fit you where you are and what you want to achieve. This part is not a competition with your group. Treat every small win as important, whether it is a nagging task or a step toward a major goal—this can be fun and inspirational. There is also no timetable here—you can use the year as a guide, but get some things done early on and don’t make mini-goals that require the full year to complete.

Treats

This is the best part! The treats you select must be motivating to you and within your budget. Remember, you will have four to six mini-goals, so choose wisely. The treats don't have to be all the same thing—this is your plan, and you get to choose!

<i>Mini-champagne bottles</i>	<i>Luxury chocolates</i>	<i>Favorite milkshake</i>
<i>Movie theater ticket (yes with popcorn)</i>	<i>Visit to driving range</i>	<i>Brunch</i>
<i>Going bowling</i>	<i>New puzzle or game</i>	<i>“Cheat meal”</i>
<i>Store or game gift cards (\$10, \$25, \$50)</i>	<i>Nice dinner out (no kids!)</i>	<i>Amusement park visit</i>
<i>Mini-perfume</i>	<i>Upgrade a gadget</i>	<i>Scalp massage</i>
<i>Pedicure</i>	<i>Art class</i>	<i>Trip to Ulta</i>
<i>Piece of fandom (Harry Potter, Star Wars)</i>	<i>Take a long bath</i>	<i>Camping trip</i>
<i>Sleeping in or a lounge day</i>	<i>Professional car cleaning</i>	<i>Lottery tickets</i>
<i>New attire (workout, work, glam)</i>	<i>New vinyl</i>	<i>Vanity subscription</i>

Setting goals is ultimately about creating a path you can actually walk—one made up of attainable steps that build confidence along the way. When you break big ambitions into achievable mini-wins and take time to celebrate each one, you reinforce progress, boost motivation and bring more joy into the journey. Small wins aren't just boxes to check—they're meaningful moments that keep you moving toward your bigger vision with clarity, purpose and momentum.