



LIFETIME GOAL-SETTING AND GOAL-GETTING

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LIFETIME GOAL-SETTING AND GOAL-GETTING RESEARCH

The applied research to determine the effectiveness or otherwise of Lifetime Goalsetting (LTGS) was comprised of three separate but interrelated studies. *Measuring Change* investigated moves towards maturation for unemployed adults as an effect of LTGS. *Perceptions of Change* examined LTGS effects from the perspective of LTGS vocational learners in terms of dispositional development. *Implications for Implementation* considered the barriers and opportunities faced by various stakeholders of implementing LTGS. Three data collection groups were used: 36 LTGS Vocational Learners; 18 Non-LTGS Vocational Learners; and 32 Employed People exposed to neither LTGS nor vocational training.

The major quantitative findings from the *Measuring Change* study were that while LTGS Vocational Learners and Non-LTGS Vocational Learners made moves towards maturation, as a consequence of LTGS, only the LTGS Vocational Learners group made strong and statistically significant moves towards maturation. Further, maturation scores increased regardless of vocational specificity, demonstrated a very large LTGS effect size and were efficacious for female and male maturation at approximately the same rate. Additionally, at Pre-course measurement, LTGS Vocational Learners recorded maturation scores that were less than those recorded by Employed People. However, by course end, LTGS Vocational Learners recorded maturation scores approaching those of Employed People. The *Perceptions of Change* study found that LTGS Vocational Learners describe their competency outcomes in non-competency referenced terms which can be categorised as dispositional, with attitudinal change being the strongest change effect of LTGS. Also, temporal references made by trainees indicated that they were thinking and talking much more about their future than their past or present circumstances as an effect of LTGS.

The *Measuring Change and Perceptions of Change* studies found that as a consequence of LTGS, the lives of unemployed adult vocational trainees were positively changed as they took action towards the achievement of their goals; in particular, individual dispositions in terms of values, interests and attitudes became more positive and empowering. Additionally, increased maturation in terms of individual autonomy, activity, objectivity, enlightenment, abilities, responsibilities, interests, altruism, self-acceptance, principles, concerns, originality, tolerance of ambiguity, and rationality meant that, as adult jobseekers, they were personally empowered to face the challenges of obtaining and sustaining employment. The findings have important ramifications for all future vocational trainees since it is the researcher's formative theory that maturation is a subset of competence in every vocational domain.

The *Implications for Implementation* study found few barriers and many opportunities for not-for-profit and for-profit service sector implementation of LTGS. Additionally, that implementation of LTGS in for-profit organisations could deliver beneficial outcomes for employed individuals with consequential organisational benefits in terms of increased employee motivation and effectiveness; engagement with lifelong learning: perhaps even increased profits.

1. LIFETIME GOAL-SETTING AND GOAL-GETTING

1.1 Introduction

Salas and Cannon-Bowers (2001) note that considerable research has gone into the factors that assist learners to optimise the benefits of training. Salas and Cannon-Bowers conclude that these factors are usually interventions employed before training. This observation is pertinent since, in part, the current thesis reports on the effects on vocational students of a pre-vocational training intervention entitled lifetime goal-setting (LTGS). Later in the thesis, quantitative research findings are reported indicating that LTGS results in personally empowering outcomes for learners in terms of dispositional development and moves towards maturation. As a result, this dissertation is about intra-individual change (Bandura 1991). It addresses questions about the malleability of human attributes; that is, the extent to which the attributes of unemployed adult vocational learners can be developed during vocational education courses that use a lifetime goal-setting intervention prior to training.

With reference to the word 'empowering' used in the paragraph above, it should be noted that the term empowerment is used often in contemporary times, but often, 'the term is used very loosely' (Wilkinson 1998, p. 40). The term implies the redistribution of power; but in practice, occurs when business managers allow employees to become more involved so as to generate employee commitment (Wilkinson 1998). Sekaran (1989) argues that when employees are more involved in job-related decisions they receive reinforcement that they are competent in their jobs. In doing so, it is important for employees to feel that they control their own actions (Thomas & Velthouse 1990). As a consequence, they show greater involvement and motivation (Sekaran 1989). It is also a psychological process used in the service industry (Jones, Taylor & Nickson 1997) in which employees are trained to adopt a state of mind to be empowered and confident when interacting with customers (Wilkinson 1998). In the current dissertation, empowerment is associated with LTGS and dispositional development involving values, interests and attitudes. In particular, the attitude

that achievement in life is an individual pursuit and responsibility, which once gained, gives individuals the power to recognise that—similar to the employees described above—they are capable, self-efficacious and capable of accomplishment of their own life goals.

Below are explained the procedures I use to introduce LTGS to vocational trainees in the classroom prior to the commencement of their vocational education. The basis for the LTGS procedure is not new; but this particular LTGS intervention contains innovations—based on psychological research findings that are cited as appropriate—that I have implemented to improve the LTGS procedure and consequential learning outcomes for trainees. I coined the title Lifetime Goal-setting to reflect the broad scope of the goal-setting and to isolate the paradigm, in the minds of trainees, from the shorter-term and vocationally-oriented Learning Agreement completed by them prior to the LTGS and delivery of the vocational education.

1.2 Lifetime Goal-setting

The essence of LTGS is learning; learning that leads to positive personal change. Positive personal change enables trainees to develop the ability to behave differently and with greater understanding. LTGS is a form of self-regulated learning as defined by Pintrich (2000):

[an] active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of the environment. These self-regulatory activities can mediate the relationships between individuals and the context, and their overall achievement (Pintrich 2000, p. 453).

As such, goals are representations of the 'motivational pull of the future' (Karniol & Ross 1996, p. 611); that is, goals give individuals the ability to borrow from the future to act today

(<http://danieljanssen.com/ArchiveArticles/goalsfueloflife.shtml>) accessed

23.10.2004). Additionally: 'It hardly needs mentioning that the goals we set ourselves are the ones we are most motivated to reach!' (Prensky 2005, p. 1).

LTGS is also a form of 'opportunity centred learning' (Rae 2003, p. 542) in which, following the planning of goals, the focus is on the identification, selection and action towards opportunities that lead to goal achievement (Rae 2003): this is reflected in the goal-getting part of the Lifetime Goal-setting and Goal-getting Action Plan (see Appendix 1). In many ways, LTGS is similar to Guenther's (2005) hypothesis that effective vocational education and training programs lead individuals into having a raised awareness in terms of having a 'knowledge of options', 'weighing up risks', 'getting another perspective' and 'looking at things another way'. (Guenther 2005, p. 6). Additionally, it raises an individual's capacity to act, to be empowered and to act with confidence:

The most fundamental and pervasive benefit from learning of every kind is a growth in self-confidence. This is probably the most commonly reported effect from all relevant research (Schuller, Brassett-Grundy, Green, Hammond & Preston 2002, p. 14).

The LTGS rationale is based on the view that:

All learning arises from goal-oriented activity....In order to learn, the organism has to be goal-oriented...it learns about only what it is goal-oriented about....it acquires the knowledge it needs to obtain what it deliberately wants. Thus, to do learning of some specific type, the learner must get itself into a situation which is goal-oriented in the right way. Many consequences follow from this requirement (Newell 1990, p. 317).

The LTGS procedure has its foundation in Meichenbaum and Biemiller's (1998, p. 148) finding that when students are goal-oriented they are 'much more likely to engage in deliberate practice, to intentionally plan and self-monitor their performance, and to persist in the face of failure and frustration.' Further they advise: 'Teachers should not leave goal-setting processes to chance' (Meichenbaum & Biemiller 1998, p. 148). Meichenbaum and Biemiller make five points that are pertinent to LTGS procedures:

1. that students should be encouraged to have short, medium and long-term goals;
2. that goal intentions should be reached within specified time limits;
3. that goals can focus on products or processes;
4. that goals which are specific, doable and proximal are more likely to motivate students' performances than vague, distant or potentially unachievable goals;
5. that students should come to see why goals are important, and have ways of self-assessing their goal attainments (Meichenbaum & Biemiller 1998).

Additionally to the above, Thompson (1999) argues that setting challenging but nonetheless attainable goals can be an effective strategy for enhancing perceptions of self-efficacy. Thompson argues that when task difficulty increases to a point near to the limits of individual ability, effort is increased and is rewarded by positive feedback from successful task accomplishment. Consequently, perceptions of self-worth are enhanced. Thompson argues that 'realistic goal-setting is critical to improved self-efficacy in achievement settings' (Thompson 1999, p. 133).

In Markus and Nurius's (1986) concept of possible selves, personal action and change, a possible self is the representation of both a desired and a feared future self. In this view, an individual can plan goals that will lead them to become the person they want to be. Carver and Scheier (1998) distinguish between three types of goals: firstly, approach goals that are prototypic positive goals and associated with behavioural pressures to move towards a given state or objective. Secondly, avoidance goals, that are associated with pressures to move away from given states. Thirdly, combination goals are those that have both avoidance and approach characteristics. In LTGS, trainees are encouraged to focus towards positive approach goals, such as employment, learning and personal development. Although, in the process trainees might plan approach goals in order to avoid a certain perceived negative outcome states such as being unemployed or lacking up-to-date vocational competence.

The LTGS procedure is based on—and to some extent follows—the Student Success Skills (SSS) model of Brigman and Campbell (2003). Brigman and Campbell (p. 94) argue that three clusters of skills are predictive of the school success of students: 1) cognitive and metacognitive skills such as goal-setting, progress monitoring, and memory skills; 2) social skills, such as interpersonal skills, social problem-solving skills, listening and teamwork skills; and, 3) self-management skills, such as managing attention, anger and motivation. In particular, LTGS focuses towards 1) above; while 2) and 3) are developed during completion of the vocational course modules. The Lifetime Goal-setting procedure detailed below is also illustrative of Zimmerman's (2000) three-phase cycle of: a) forethought; b) performance and volitional control; and, c) self-reflection. Zimmerman's three-phase cycle is itself closely related to Bandura's (1999) agentic perspective of social cognitive theory detailed earlier in the literature review chapters. Additionally, in relation to LTGS, Garner (1990) found that as a result of lifetime goal-setting and goal-getting, individuals become increasingly self-regulated learners who develop declarative knowledge about which specific learning strategies to employ, procedural knowledge about how to implement goal strategies and the contextual and metacognitive knowledge to effectively pursue and achieve their goals.

1.3 Lifetime Goal-setting procedure

On the first day of their course, trainees are guided through an extensive orientation to the vocational education course itself. As part of the course orientation, each trainee completes a Learning and Action Plan related to the vocational goal outcomes associated with the particular vocational Training Package being used. Then, following the course orientation and prior to the delivery of vocational education, the trainer guides trainees through the eight stages of the LTGS procedure detailed below. The LTGS procedure is based on telic theory. Telic theories are endpoint theories and two approaches are evident in the research literature. Firstly, a goal approach, in which end-states are considered to reflect idiosyncratic goals. Secondly, a need approach, in which end-states are considered to reflect common needs of an individual

(Omodei & Wearing 1990). Csikszentmihalyi (1988) suggests that consideration of end states leads to individual involvement because achievement of the end-state represents closure to the activity. Further, it is the movement towards closure that provides grounds for restriction of attention to relevant end-point stimuli. The LTGS procedure detailed below subscribes to the first of the telic theories above; the goal approach, in which idiosyncratic goals are planned and actioned. However, in the process, an individual might also plan goals that reflect common needs of individuals as suggested by Omodei and Wearing.

LTGS commences with the trainer explaining to trainees the rationale and procedures of LTGS. This introduction to LTGS is necessary since:

adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it...Consequently, one of the new aphorisms in adult education is that the first task of the facilitator of learning is to help the learners become aware of the need to know (Knowles 1990, p. 57).

It is understanding the rationale and procedures of LTGS that enables trainees to formulate their own LTGS plan (see Appendix 1: Lifetime Goal-setting and Goal-getting Action Plan). The following rationale is discussed with trainees:

Goal-setting is a formal process for personal planning. By setting goals on a routine basis you decide what you want to achieve and then move step-by-step towards the achievement of these goals. The process of setting goals and targets allows you to choose where you want to go in life....It gives you long-term vision and short-term motivation.

(<http://www.mindtools.com/page6.html>, accessed 23.10.2004).

The trainer facilitates trainees' understanding that the implicit purpose of LTGS is for each individual to become the person capable of achieving their planned goals and that learning is the key to goal achievement. Within the LTGS paradigm there is the implicit recognition that for an individual's life circumstances to change, that individual must change. Thus, the purpose of LTGS is not to get something, but rather, to learn and to become someone qualitatively different. The primary purpose of goal-setting is to become more self-efficacious; to become the person capable of achieving the planned goals.

In an American study on transitional life changes as reasons for adult learning, Aslanian and Bricknell (1980) found that eighty-three per cent of adult learners involved in their study were involved with learning in order to cope with a transition. The transitions identified primarily involved career (56 per cent) and family life transitions (35 per cent); thus indicating a link between motivations to learn and adult life experiences. This view is supported by Jarvis (1993) who argues that the motivation for learning does not always lie within the learner, but in the dynamic tension that exists between the learner and the socio-cultural world; mostly the world related to employment and work.

In the motivation to learn as a consequence of adult life experiences view above, the motivation to learn is a dynamic, multifaceted phenomenon that enables individuals to be motivated in multiple ways (Linnenbrink & Pintrich 2002): this has resonance with the social cognitive model of motivation. The social cognitive model of motivation theorises that motivation is not a stable trait of an individual, but is situated, contextual and domain specific, with the individuals' own thoughts about motivation and learning playing a key role in achievement (Linnenbrink & Pintrich 2002). Two further examples of the link between motivation, learning and life events are Knox's (1985) proficiency theory that posits that adults experience gaps between their current proficiency levels and desired levels related to roles as spouse or worker; and in Mezirow's (1991) process of perspective transformation—also a learning event—in which learning is precipitated by a disorienting dilemma, such as unemployment. Within the learning events described above there are structural components that often shape the learning experience. These structural components include gender, race, class, cultural diversity, power and oppression (Merriam & Caffarella 1999)

1.4 Eight major stages of the Lifetime Goal-setting procedure

The LTGS procedure has eight major stages:

1. Developing an understanding of LTGS
2. Definition of a goal

3. Three tenets of LTGS
4. The Real and the Ideal
5. SMARTER LTGS
6. Recognition of accomplishment
7. Nine interrelated segments of life
8. Action planning

Each of the eight major stages of LTGS is discussed in detail below. During discussion of the eight stages with trainees, they use the documentation titled *Lifetime Goal-setting and Goal-getting Action Plan* (see Appendix 1: Lifetime Goal-setting and Goal-getting Action Plan) to record the stages in writing and to later plan and write their goals in the nine interrelated segments of life section.

It is argued that simply imagining goals is not sufficient to facilitate self-regulatory activities: they must be written (Oettingen 1996). This follows on from evidence cited in the literature to support the notion that writing promotes understanding of content matter (Ammon & Ammon 1987; Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod & Rosen 1975; Klauser 2000; Tchudi & Tchudi 1983). The importance of writing goals has been widely endorsed by Klauser (2000) who argues that a person's life can be viewed as a narrative the person has a hand in writing. In particular, Klauser claims that writing goals alerts the reticular activating brain system. The reticular formation is part of the brainstem, 'the brain's oldest and innermost region' (Myers 1995, p. 55). The brainstem begins where the spinal cord enters the skull and ends at the thalamus. The reticular formation passes through both the brainstem and thalamus (Myers 1995). According to Myers, sensory input from the spinal cord travels through the network of neurons that comprise the reticular formation towards the thalamus. In doing so, the reticular formation filters the incoming stimuli and relays important information to relevant areas of the brain. In Klauser's explanation, the reticular formation evaluates incoming sensory data in terms of the data being either essential or non-essential. The activating system allows an individual to be alerted and to react when the stimuli is specific and useful. A popular example of this phenomenon cited by Klauser occurs when an individual purchases a car of a make and colour not previously purchased. When first driving the new car, the owner notices many more of this make and

colour car than ever noticed before. Ownership of the new make and colour provides the initial record in the brain and the reticular formation is activated each time incoming sensory stimuli notices the same make and colour in its environment. In relation to LTGS, Klauser's argument suggests that writing goals allows the brain to record what is important to an individual; then, when an important item appears in the individual's environment the reticular formation recognises the item as important and alerts the individual.

1.4.1 Developing an understanding of LTGS

L. P. Hartley (1953, p.1) famously wrote 'the past is a foreign country.' I argue that the future is, more so, a foreign country: a foreign country one is more ably equipped to explore when a person has a map for guidance. For this reason, to assist trainees to understand LTGS, an analogy is drawn between using a road map to travel to a destination one has not been to before and using a LTGS plan to reach desired personal goals.

Areglado, Bradley and Lane (1996) argue that reading a road map on a long trip to identify the route and to make the journey more accurate and enjoyable is analogous to a student's need for a cognitive map for their journey through learning: "there are a host of metacognitive processes to be mapped out in a student's mind during the process of acquiring knowledge" (Areglado, Bradley & Lane 1996, p. 6). While Areglado, Bradley and Lane did not have LTGS in mind, the road map analogy can be effectively used to introduce to trainees the process of LTGS and the learning that needs to occur for individuals to achieve their goals. This is explained in more detail in Stage 6 of the goal-setting procedure: Recognition of Accomplishment.

In class discussion facilitated by the trainer, each trainees' lifetime—that is, between birth and death—is compared to a journey; a journey to a destination not previously visited. In both instances—the lifetime and the journey—a map can provide guidance on the correct route to take. But, since one cannot simply

purchase a map for personal lifetime destinations, each individual needs to design their own lifetime map. The process of designing and compiling the map or plan is labelled LTGS. The concept of setting goals for a lifetime is based on the view that:

Many people travel through the time of their lives without a destination, without a plan, without a purpose. With planning, you significantly increase the value of your journey through life. You gain control over its progress and freedom over your options. With a plan, you can choose the outcomes that you want and the actions that increase the likelihood of their occurrence. In total, planning increases the efficiency and the effectiveness of your life. It's like having a blueprint for success. Developing a life plan is the ultimate engineering project (Kaye 2001, p. 1).

Greenhaus, Callanan and Kaplan (1995) offer three prescriptions for career goal-setting that seem equally applicable for lifetime goal-setting: firstly, goals should ideally be compatible with personal values, talents, interests and preferred lifestyle since goals are contingent on the circumstances of particular points in an individual's lifetime. Secondly, goals should not be planned to please others, but should incorporate an understanding of the relationships between work, family and personal life. Thirdly, goals should have dual concern for present and future satisfactions and incorporate a balanced approach.

1.4.2 Definition of a goal

Trainees are provided with several goal definitions for discussion. For example:

a goal is 'the purpose toward which any endeavor is directed' and 'an outcome that one strives to achieve by proper planning'

(http://freetoasthost.org/Goal_Setting.html)

a goal is 'something we consciously want to attain, accomplish or achieve' or 'aims, targets, or tracks to run on that give our energies specific direction'

(http://www.tennisserver.com/mental-equipment/me_5_96.html)

a goal is 'a desirable state of future affairs one intends to attain through action' (Kruglanski 1996, p. 599).

In my experience over the years, countless introductions of LTGS have revealed to me that, following class discussion, many trainees come up with a definition that recognises the three essential ingredients of a goal. Firstly, trainees realise that goals are something that they set out to achieve; secondly goals are achieved by actions; and thirdly, goals need a timeframe for achievement. As a consequence, often, the resulting goal definition reads: *a goal is something I intend to accomplish, by my actions, in an allotted period of time.* In this definition, to Kruglanski's general goal idea has been added the important addendum: *in an allotted period of time*, since having a timeline for the completion of each goal is considered to be an essential motivating factor in goal achievement. Additionally, the inclusion of the time factor to the general definition of a goal brings the definition into line with a pithy definition often used in goal-setting: *a goal is a dream; with a deadline.*

1.4.3 Three tenets of LTGS

In this part of the introduction to LTGS the trainer explains to trainees the three major tenets of goal-setting. Over the past two decades I have derived these tenets from generalised goal-setting methods that have been published in books and more recently on the internet. My first tenet of goal-setting states: *the more precise the knowledge of a goal, the more likelihood of reaching or achieving the goal.* The trainer draws on the analogy of using a map to reach a holiday destination. To arrive at a holiday destination, a precise knowledge of the destination is needed before commencing the journey. Knowing precisely where one is going prior to starting out increases the likelihood of reaching the desired destination. So, too, with idiosyncratic goals.

The second tenet of goal-setting states that: *even when one has perfect and precise knowledge of a goal, one may miss achieving it for any number of reasons. Having a goal does not guarantee that it will be achieved.* The trainer points out to trainees that every individual can suffer misfortune in their lifetime,

sometimes as a result of environmental circumstance or what is commonly referred to as 'bad luck'. As a result, individuals can fail to achieve their particular aims or goals. However, non-achievement of goals does not need to signal to individuals that they are not successful, so long as other goals remain to be accomplished. This explanation leads to the third tenet of LTGS that states that: *it is essential to have many goals, in every major area of life, so that one can miss achieving a few goals but still reach and achieve many important personal lifetime goals.* The argument is put by the trainer that, if individuals have only one goal in life and it is not achieved, individuals can suffer consequential feelings of inadequacy and a lack of self-efficaciousness. The trainer then further illustrates the importance of setting many goals using the following example, which uses words that I have found to be influential:

imagine that your singular goal is to find full-time employment and for whatever reasons you fail to reach your goal. There is a strong likelihood that you will begin to feel frustrated, disappointed and less efficacious. You might also begin to lose confidence and feel unwanted, and as a result, start to feel depressed and unmotivated. However, if you were pursuing three simultaneous goals, such as, looking for a job, attending a vocational course to increase your personal competence and skills, and had goals to engage in daily exercise with a view to being fit and healthy, then, not immediately finding a job would not be viewed so negatively since you would already be developing new vocational skills which would likely increase your chances of gaining employment. Additionally, your daily exercise goals towards health and fitness would reduce feelings of inadequacy and fill out the day when not job-seeking or attending the vocational course.

Thus, it is essential for trainees to understand that for personal or structural reasons some goals may not be achieved. However, when trainees are pursuing multiple goals simultaneously, the lack of achievement of some goals can be more than compensated for by the successful achievement of other goals.

1.4.4 The Real and the Ideal Exercise

Boyatzis (1995, pp. 54-55) argues that change and learning, particularly self-directed change, occurs when an individual:

- Articulates an image of where they are with regard to a particular characteristic (The Real);
- Articulates an image of where they would like to be with regard to that characteristic (The Ideal);
- Perceives and experiences a discrepancy between The Real and The Ideal;
- The discrepancy is then converted into a goal to achieve the desired change.

In the LTGS procedure, prior to setting goals, trainees are requested to involve themselves in two exercises that are explained, and are also detailed in print on the forms used to complete goal-setting exercises (see Appendix 1: Goal-setting and Goal-getting action plan: The Real Exercise and The Ideal Exercise).

The Real and The Ideal exercise is based on the finding that people prioritise goals based on their current concerns or particular life tasks at a given point in time (e.g., Cantor, Markus, Niedenthal & Nurius 1986; Emmons 1986; Little 1989; Nikula, Klinger, Larson-Gutman 1993; Palys & Little 1983). In particular, Cantor et al (1986) suggest that when people pursue particular life tasks they are guided by representations of themselves in the future. For this reason, in the first part of the exercise—The Real Exercise—trainees write a comprehensive description about where they perceive themselves to be now in their lives, and the events and circumstances that led them to this point. Since The Real description, more often than not, contains personally sensitive information the trainer gives trainees reassurance that no one will be asked to disclose to others what they have written.

In the second part of the exercise—The Ideal—trainees writes a comprehensive description about how they would like to see themselves in the future, and their vision of what success means to them. In my years of introducing LTGS to

trainees, the Ideal Exercise often generates a good deal of discussion; especially if I ask the following open question to the entire group of trainees: *what would you like to have in your life that you don't have now?* The most common reply, and mostly from females, is: *lots of money or more money or a million dollars.* This gives a trainer the opportunity to say that while it is true that acquiring wealth can be useful, in itself, the acquisition of money is a hollow achievement unless accompanied by family and friends, and the health to enjoy it. This provides trainees with a starting point for writing a few lines about how they would like their life to be different in the future. Trainees can also be asked to consider what aspects of their life are most important to them. This exploratory exercise is often useful for trainees considering their future. Many people have suggested that the following items are the ingredients of success. Trainees are asked to read through the seven items and rank order all seven items from most important to least important: *Instruction: Please rank order all seven items below with the number 1 next to the item that is most important for you and 7 next to the least important item:*

- ___ happiness and peace of mind
- ___ excellent health
- ___ loving relationships
- ___ adequate income
- ___ satisfying employment
- ___ self-knowledge
- ___ self-fulfilment

In relation to goal-setting, the Real-Ideal exercise is based on the control theory of self regulation in which:

behaviour is a discrepancy reduction process operating in a negative feedback loop. Individuals act to minimize the discrepancy between their present condition and a desired standard or goal (Emmons 1992, p. 297).

Also, in a review of the relevant literature Emmons (1996) found that the motivations underlying goal-oriented behaviour, particularly when the goals involved searching for meaningfulness in one's life, had all the essential elements of goal-based theory of subjective well-being.

1.4.5 SMARTER lifetime goal-setting

Richmond (2003, p. 1) proposes that the SMART acronym be used when planning goals. SMART refers to goals being Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-framed (Richmond 2003, p. 1). Others, such as the Office of Human Resources at Bowling Green State University in Ohio (2004) argue that SMART refers to goals being Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely. While the two examples cited use different terms, they are conceptually similar. In relation to SMART goal-setting, Latham (2003) argues that superordinate goals capture the heart by focusing primarily on affect and appealing to emotion. Further, that superordinate overarching goals galvanise people into action by facilitating self-management. But, contrasting with Latham's view that superordinate goals appeal primarily to affect, I argue that goal-setting, as detailed in this dissertation, is foremost a cognitive variable that moves goals away from emotional rhetoric to being a concrete action step:

More than 500 laboratory and field experiments in psychology have shown that urging people to do their best, to "get on this task right away," pales in comparison to the person's performance from setting a SMART goal. This is because a specific high goal allows people to evaluate their performance in relation to the goal, to make adjustments where necessary, to increase their effort, and to persist until the concrete goal is attained (Latham 2003, p. 314).

Further to the above, Latham (2003) argues that performance goals should be set when people have the necessary knowledge and skills to achieve their goals; but, when people lack the skills and knowledge to achieve their performance goals, that learning goals should be set. In the present LTGS procedure, participants plan both performance and learning goals. In fact, it is the learning goals that represent the core activity of the SMARTER method. In the SMARTER goal-setting procedure I have added two features to Richmond's SMART acronym. I recommend that trainees use the SMARTER goal-setting and goal-getting method that adds **E**nergetically actioned and **R**eviewed and

rewarded to the previous SMART formulaic acronym. Thus, the SMARTER goal-setting acronym stands for: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**ime-framed, **E**nergetically actioned, **R**eviewed and rewarded. Each of the SMARTER LTGS key terms are explained in detail below.

1.4.6 Specific and Measurable goals

When a planned goal is written in specific and measurable terms, progress towards its achievement can be easily recognised:

Such a decision takes the format of "I intend to achieve X!" And therefore is best conceived of as a goal intention. The X specifies a desired end-state, which may be the execution of concrete behaviour or the attainment of a desired outcome. Accordingly, the consequence of having formed a goal intention is a feeling of commitment to achieve this end state (Gollwitzer 1996, p. 292).

Since goals regulate performance most predictably when expressed in specific quantitative terms rather than vague intentions (Richmond 2003) it is essential for trainees to set realistic goals that can be measured. In the present research, prior to compiling a list of goals in each of the later explained major areas of life, trainees are provided with examples of specific and measurable goals, such as:

- I will earn an income of \$50,000 per annum by July 2009
- I will visit my mother once a week starting 4 February 2006
- I will eat one apple and one banana each day starting today 26 January 2006.

Further to the above, research indicates that goals are most likely to affect performance under the following conditions:

individuals with specific and hard or challenging goals outperform individuals with specific easy goals, do-best goals, or no assigned goals (Locke et al, 1981, p. 145).

Based on Locke et al's view that specific and hard, or challenging goals are best, goal-setting trainees are encouraged to plan challenging yet achievable goals.

1.4.7 Achievable and Realistic goals

The trainer suggests to each trainee that when they are compiling their goal lists, if they can plan goals that they can perceive as achievable and realistic there is a stronger likelihood that those goals will be pursued. For this reason, trainees are asked to take into consideration their genetic inheritance, biological capabilities, educational qualifications and present circumstances in terms of health, wealth and wisdom when planning towards potentially achievable and realistic lifetime goals. Examples of unrealistic goal intentions are provided by the trainer and discussed with participants. Examples of trainees planning unrealistic goals include:

- an early school-leaver with no history of employment setting a goal to be employed and earning \$100,000 per annum within six months;
- a non-sportsperson setting a goal to become a golf or tennis champion playing on the world circuit within a year;
- an overweight person planning to lose 15 kilograms in weight in 15 days.

On the basis of the unrealistic goal expectations above, more realistic goals are provided to trainees as examples of realistic and achievable goals:

- an early school-leaver with no history of employment setting a goal to be assessed as competent in all of the vocational education modules in the present course and to secure a work-experience placement;
- a non-sportsperson setting a goal to have lessons to learn how to play golf and to play at least once a week for the next 52 weeks;
- an overweight person planning to lose 5 kilograms in weight over a period of 6 months by following a health professional's recommended healthy diet regime and thrice-weekly exercise program.

1.4.8 Timelined goals

In the goal-setting procedure, once a goal destination has been planned, then a timeline for its accomplishment must be added: goals 'must include a timeframe within which the goal is to be achieved'

(http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/lgmodules/wep/setting_up/training/training6.html, p. 1., accessed 16.09.2004). Klauser (2000) refers to timelining goals as 'what by when' (Klauser 2000, p. 157). In addition, Carver and Scheier (1999) argue that goals should not only provide destinations, they should specify the pathway of steps to be taken through the decomposition of goals into sub-goals. Further, I argue that a series of sub-goals towards different goal destinations be worked towards simultaneously in a timed manner. In this way, in the event that a sub-goal or goal is not reached, or is not reached in the specified time, the person does not experience feelings of failure or of despair since other goals remain to be accomplished and the goal timeline can be extended.

When setting sub-goals that lead to achievement of major goals, trainees set short-term or proximal goals that can be accomplished in as little as a day or take up to a year for completion. Medium-term goals can be accomplished in as little as three months but might extend to three or more years. Long-term or distal goals allow four, five, ten or twenty years for completion. All goals—short, medium or long-term—must have attached to them a timeline for completion.

1.4.9 Energetically Actioned, Reviewed and Rewarded goals

Following compilation of complete lifetime goal list, each trainee is encouraged to simultaneously pursue, with energetic action, a minimum of five goals. As well, trainees are reminded that goal plans are not set in concrete: goals can, and must, be reviewed and adjusted from time to time—perhaps annually—in relation to goals already achieved. Also, new goals can be added to the goal plan taking into account new circumstances since: 'Not only do individuals differ in their views of self-direction in learning, but each individual's view is likely to change over time' (Brockett & Hiemstra 1991, p. 21). This review process is similar in nature to the third of Zimmerman's (2000) three-phase cycle during which the individual reflects upon what has been accomplished and what yet needs to be achieved.

When sub-goals or major goals are achieved, inherent rewards can accrue for the goal-achiever that can result in additional motivation towards other goals and provide individuals with self-recognition for goals achieved, thus boosting self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy. However, in addition to the inherent reward feelings enjoyed by goal-achievers, I recommend that additional self-provided rewards be awarded. Goal-achieving individuals can reward themselves with a block of chocolate, a pat on one's own back or extensive rewards such as an overseas holiday or new clothes. Rewards should also be provided by the goal-achievers to those who assist the goal-achiever to accomplish their goals. Goal-achievement, more often than not, involves others, such as a supportive mother, father, spouse or children, trainer and mentors: they, too, should be rewarded for their efforts.

In relation to self-esteem and self-efficacy noted in the paragraph above, it must be noted that self-efficacy is not self-esteem and the two constructs should not be confused (Linnenbrink & Pintrich 2002). Self-efficacy is an individual's judgement of task specific capabilities based on successful accomplishments, and failures. Self-esteem is a more general affective evaluation of self (Linnenbrink & Pintrich 2002).

1.4.10 Recognition of accomplishment

At this stage in the LTGS procedure, trainees are asked by the trainer to identify in writing at least three things that they have accomplished in their lifetime. The purpose of the exercise is to enable trainees to recognise that they are capable of accomplishment. This is an important stage in the LTGS procedure, especially for the unemployed adults—LTGS Vocational Learners—who are the primary focus of the current research. In Chapter 6 of this paper are reported research findings that testify to the strong likelihood that, for most individuals, unemployment is a negative experience. In brief, the research on unemployment concludes that unemployed individuals experience lowered subjective competence, aspiration and autonomy. For these reasons, it is essential that LTGS trainees recognise that, despite their present state of

unemployment, unemployment is a state, not a trait. Being unemployed is one way of a trainee describing their current state. However, despite their current state, most trainees will have experienced certain achievements in their lives prior to being unemployed. For example, a trainee may have successfully completed Year 10 at school; been a team player in a local sports club; raised a family or saved for, and purchased a bicycle or motor vehicle. Thus, recognition of accomplishment leads trainees to recognise that despite their current state as unemployed, since accomplishment is possible, their future goals can be pursued with confidence and determination.

1.4.11 Nine interrelated segments of life

Levinson (1986, p. 4) suggests that research on the life course should include all aspects of living such as participation in family, work and other social systems, inner wishes and fantasies, love relationships, and bodily changes. For this reason, in relation to LTGS, it is hypothesised that by separating a lifetime into segments, trainees are able to effectively plan specific, achievable and realistic goals in relation to each specific interrelated life segment. The trainer suggests that the nine interrelated segments of life that can be used for LTGS are:

1. an income and expenditure segment;
2. a personal development and education segment;
3. a family and friends segment;
4. a recreation, holidays and travel segment;
5. a health and lifestyle segment;
6. a career, employment or business segment;
7. a theistic/religious or atheistic/non-religious segment;
8. a retirement segment;
9. a community volunteer involvement and welfare of others segment

A benefit deriving from a simultaneous focus towards all nine goal-setting segments above is that a balanced lifestyle is created. A balanced lifestyle is one that avoids excessive attention to or involvement with only one or two life

segments and is argued to pay off in increased energy and better health (<http://text.alis.gov.ab.ca/tips/archive.asp?EK=98> accessed 28 January 2006). A questionnaire on the internet entitled *Do you have a balanced lifestyle?* has seven of the above nine segments in the questionnaire (<http://www.kgreeer.com/balance.php> accessed 28 January 2006).

Prior to actually writing their short-term, medium and long-term goals under the appropriate segment heading, trainees are encouraged to write their own name in full at the top of the Goal-setting and Goal-getting Action Plan (see Appendix 1: Goal-setting and Goal-getting Action Plan). This is to assist trainees to understand that the LTGS is exclusively for their own lifetime. Trainees then plan a minimum of five major goals in each of the nine segments of life. Thus, when completed, each LTGS plan has a minimum of forty-five interrelated major goals to be achieved over the period of an individual's lifetime. As goal-setting continues, trainees break major goals into achievable sub-goals. This is based on Plato's suggestion in *Republic* that people plan for their future by starting with their goals and working backwards (Karniol & Ross 1996). Sub-goals are described as bite-sized achievable pieces; each with its own timeline for completion and achievement.

1.4.12 Action planning

For goals to be achieved the concrete steps that must be enacted in order to accomplish goals must be specified (Cameron & Nicholls 1998): these are labelled action plans. Regardless of the timed duration needed to achieve each goal, each major goal must be broken into smaller achievable goals, that when actioned, can lead ultimately to successful achievement. For example, a trainee plans a four-year term goal to become a qualified hairdresser and be earning \$30,000 per annum by 31 December 2009. The action plan might break the long term goal into four parts:

1. Collect and analyse information about hairdressing course enrolments and secure enrolment prior to 30 November 2004;

2. Commence hairdressing course. Study to successful completion of first year and gain a part-time hairdressing apprenticeship by 30 November 2005;
3. Continue second year studies to successful completion of second year on 30 November 2006. Work part-time as an apprentice hairdresser;
4. Continue third and final year studies and part-time work. Study to successful completion of hairdressing qualification by 30 December 2007. As a reward, use money saved from part-time work to holiday in Cairns for 2 weeks from 2 to 16 January 2008;
5. Upon return from holidays, by 31 December 2009 secure a full-time employment position with remuneration of \$30,000 per annum.

The final action-planning part of the LTGS process involves three short, potentially insightful, exercises to be completed by trainees. Firstly, trainees are requested to select from the forty-five goals they have planned, at least five goals to start working towards simultaneously. The action plan is supported by completion of the second exercise in which participants write an answer to the question: what will I do tomorrow that will make a difference? Lastly, participants are requested to reflect upon, and write an answer to the question: what sort of person must I become to achieve my goals?

1.4.13 Taking action towards the achievement of goals

It is critically and fundamentally essential that LTGS participants understand that in order for their goals to be realised, they will need to do something; that is, take action towards the achievement of their goals. LTGS participants must understand that the planning procedures are only the first small step—and the easiest step—towards personal accomplishment of goals. In order for goals to be achieved, participants will need to take each action step planned until each goal is accomplished. The following advice is offered by Dobbins and Pettman (1997) in a lengthy chapter on goal-setting:

One of the best kept secrets of the universe is that goal achieving is automatic provided you are prepared to set goals and to pay the necessary price in advance (Dobbins & Pettman 1997, p. 557).

What Dobbins and Pettman mean when they speak of paying the necessary price in advance is that in order to achieve goals, the planner must make the necessary efforts to learn the skills and take the necessary action. Engaging with the LTGS procedures detailed above is important; 'but only action gets results' (Dobbins & Pettman 1997, p. 534).

Appendix 1

Lifetime Goal-setting and Goal-getting Action Plan



LIFETIME GOAL-SETTING AND GOAL-GETTING ACTION PLAN

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'Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?'
'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to' said the cat.
'I don't much care where...' said Alice.
'Then it doesn't matter which way you go' said the cat.
Alice in Wonderland. Lewis Carroll

Goal-setting, goal-getting and action planning explained

If, like Alice above, you don't care where you go in your life, or don't care whether or not you achieve your dreams, then this session is probably not for you. However, most people do have dreams for their future. Some people would like a more secure and well-paid job. Others would like to get married, build a home or travel, or start their own business. No matter what your dreams, research indicates that when you have a well-designed plan and an idea of when you want to accomplish your goals, your chances of success are increased. Goal setting theory suggests that even good health or friends may not come your way without detailed planning and action.

Goal-setting is planning specific goals for your future. Goal-getting is taking action on your plans to achieve your goals. The premise of setting goals for a lifetime is that any plan is better than no plan at all. Lifetime goal-setting is like designing a road map to guide you through your life. Since your life is a journey you have not yet taken, it makes sense to have a map to guide you towards the destinations you would like to reach.

A goal plan will never make your life worse. A goal plan will only lead to increased and more effective learning. As a consequence of goal-setting and goal-getting you will never accomplish less; in fact, you might even accomplish more than you ever dreamed possible. Following completion of your goal-setting today you will probably realise that in order to reach many of your goals you will have to learn some new skills, develop some new abilities and practice some new dispositions.

A GOAL DEFINED:

A goal is something _____,
by _____,
in _____.

'Many people travel through the time of their lives without a destination, without a plan, without a purpose. With planning, you significantly increase the value of your journey through life. You gain control over its progress and freedom over your options. With a plan, you can choose the outcomes that you want and the actions that increase the likelihood of their occurrence. In total, planning increases the efficiency and the effectiveness of your life. It's like having a blueprint for success. Developing a life plan is the ultimate engineering project' (Kaye 2001, p. 1).

THE REAL EXERCISE

While it seems corny to say that today is the first day of the rest of your life, it just happens to be true. So, to start the rest of your life, and to begin the goal-setting procedure, write a few lines below about yourself and your life as it is now. This will provide a starting point for the rest of your life.

If you are dissatisfied in any way about your employment situation, concerned about your income or savings, uneasy about your personal relationships, if you are sad or unhappy in any way, disappointed with your education or skill levels, or your health is not as good as you would like, then be sure to note these aspects below. Remember, the stronger the unhappiness and emotion, the stronger will be your motivation to plan goals and action to change those aspects.

THE IDEAL EXERCISE

Now, imagine your life as you would like it to be in the future. Try to image what success means to you in terms of health, happiness, income, career, family and friends. In the past, when completing this part of goalsetting, some people have written a single goal; that is, to have lots of money. While it is true that acquiring wealth can be useful, in itself, the acquisition of money is a hollow achievement unless accompanied by family and friends, and the health to enjoy it. Now, write a few lines below about how you would like your life to be different in the future from what it is today.

One important part of your journey towards achieving your goals through learning is discovering what is important to you. Many people have suggested that the following items are the ingredients of success. Read through the seven items and number them in order of importance for you. Put 1 next to the item that is most important for you and 7 for the least important item:

- ___ happiness and peace of mind
- ___ excellent health
- ___ loving relationships
- ___ adequate income
- ___ satisfying employment
- ___ self-knowledge
- ___ self-fulfilment

There are three critically important points to understand about goal setting and goal getting:

1. the major achievement of setting goals is not what I get, but rather, _____ as I achieve my goals;
2. the major reason for setting goals is so that _____
_____;
3. For things to change and get better for me, _____.

THREE TENETS OF GOAL SETTING AND GOAL GETTING

- 1. the more precise your knowledge of the goal, the more likelihood there is of achieving the goal;**
- 2. even when one has perfect knowledge of a goal, one may not achieve it;**
- 3. since even when one has perfect knowledge of a goal one may not achieve it, it is important to have many goals in life.**

SMARTER LIFETIME GOAL SETTING

- Goals must be **S**
- Goals must be **M**
- Goals must be **A**
- Goals must be **R**
- Goals must be **T**
- Goals must be **E**
- Goals must be **R**

Recognition of, and congratulations for three things I have accomplished in my lifetime:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The people who set goals are the people who become successful. Set goals for your career, set goals for your own self-development and set goals for your private life....This is a challenging exercise. It requires self-knowledge and courage....Unfortunately, you always have to pay the price for success in advance. You have to make the necessary efforts to learn the skills, be positive and take the necessary action....only action gets results (Dobbins & Pettman 1997, p. 10).

GOAL-SETTING AND GOAL-GETTING ACTION PLAN FOR

INCOME SEGMENT	<small>DATE</small>	FURTHER EDUCATION, TRAINING OR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SEGMENT	<small>DATE</small>	RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS SEGMENT	<small>DATE</small>
1		1		1	
2		2		2	
3		3		3	
4		4		4	
5		5		5	
RECREATION, HOLIDAYS AND TRAVEL SEGMENT	<small>DATE</small>	HEALTH SEGMENT	<small>DATE</small>	CAREER, EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS SEGMENT	<small>DATE</small>
1		1		1	
2		2		2	
3		3		3	
4		4		4	
5		5		5	
THEISTIC OR ATHEISTIC SEGMENT	<small>DATE</small>	RETIREMENT SEGMENT	<small>DATE</small>	COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER AND WELFARE OF OTHERS SEGMENT	<small>DATE</small>
1		1		1	
2		2		2	
3		3		3	
4		4		4	
5		5		5	

SELECT FIVE GOALS FROM ALL THAT YOU HAVE PLANNED TO START WORKING TOWARDS IMMEDIATELY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What will I do, starting tomorrow, that will make a difference to my life?

What sort of person must I become in order to achieve my goals?

To become a champion, strive not to surpass your opposition, but rather yourself. For those who consistently outperform themselves will ultimately outperform their opposition. James E. Loehr

Unless your personal efforts are guided by well-defined and time-lined goals—and the knowledge to effectively take action to pursue those goals—the deeper the pit you will find yourself in. This occurs because without well-defined goals most of your daily efforts are directed to solving your immediate problems such as getting a job or paying the bills.

The problem with day-to-day living with no long term goals is that when your immediate problem has been solved you find that you are only back again at the beginning. In my view, you deserve something better than only ever finding yourself where you began. This is why I suggest that a well-defined and time-lined goal plan, and an action plan for achieving your goals, will ensure that wherever you end up, you will always be ahead of where you started from.