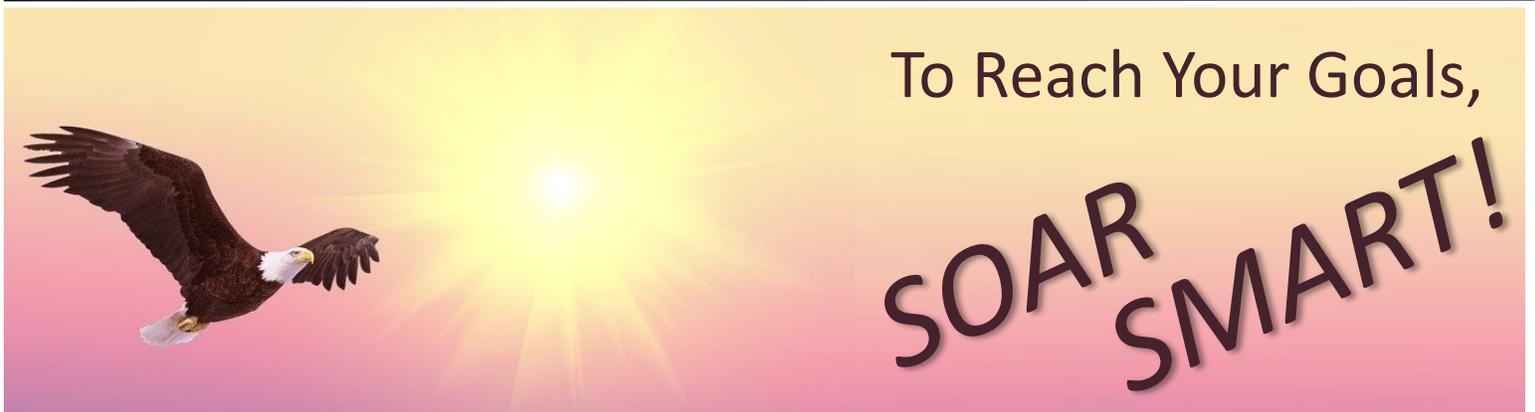


Topic of the Month

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Free - Help Yourself!



Getting from Point A to Point B can sometimes be a challenge, especially when that journey involves changing our thoughts and behaviors. Instead of trying to drag yourself forward using just willpower, with a little planning - you can SOAR!

S.O.A.R. is an acronym that stands for **S**trengths, **O**pportunities, **A**spirations, and **R**esults. It's a strategic planning tool that can help you to move from simply having a wish to developing a plan to make that wish a reality.

Being intentional about examining these aspects of your life can help you identify and build on the resources that you already have, scope out the "bright spots" in your life where there are opportunity and support, get clear on what matters to you and how it motivates you to move forward, and helps you develop markers that will let you know when you've reached your target.

When you're contemplating change, first make sure that you've broken any big ambitions into smaller, more manageable sub-goals, then ask yourself these questions. You might find it helpful to write down your answers.

STRENGTHS

- What do you already do well?
- What skills or traits have other people pointed out as being strengths?
- What in your life are you most proud of?
- What makes you unique?
- What resources do you have access to?
- How have you succeeded in the past?
- Given what you know about yourself, what are some of the things that can help you succeed again?

OPPORTUNITIES

- What current circumstances in your life can help you reach your goal?
- What partnerships could you develop?
- Who do you know that will support you as you make these changes?

ASPIRATIONS

- What matters most to you?
- How can you build on or expand your strengths?
- When you've reached your goal, how will your life be better?
- What will you be able to do, and how will you think and feel about yourself?

RESULTS

- How will you know when you've succeeded?
- This is the place where you make sure your goals are S.M.A.R.T. These are a very clear objectives that help you stay on course and identify when you've reached your target.
- How will you know when you've arrived, if you're not clear on where you're going? *Flip this sheet over for tips!*

After you've gotten a clear picture of how you can soar, take a moment to plan for possible turbulence. What challenges or difficulties you might encounter? How might you address these? Thinking about what could go wrong isn't planning to fail. It's acknowledging that the winds of life change, but you're not going to be blown off course when they do.

So... in looking over your flight plan, on a scale of 1 - 10, how confident are you that you can reach this goal? If your answer is less 7, you might want to consider whittling away at the size of the changes. Start small, and build on your successes!

**TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES CAN TAKE A LOT OF SUPPORT. WE'RE HERE TO HELP!
ASK A NURSE OR PROVIDER IF YOU'D LIKE TO TALK.**

IS YOUR GOAL

S.M.A.R.T. is another useful acronym when it comes to making change. It helps you to remember to make sure your goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ppropriate, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime bound. Without these supports, it's hard for hopes and dreams to grow into achievable goals.

SPECIFIC

Is your goal blurry (eat better) or clear (eat more vegetables and fruit)? If your goal is too abstract, there's no obvious path forward.

MEASURABLE

Making your goals measurable enables you to track your progress and helps keep you motivated. For instance, 3 servings of vegetables and 2 of fruit is something that you can observe, record, and compare your actions to.

Measurable goals answers questions such as:

How much? How many? How often? How long?

APPROPRIATE

Will this goal be in your best interest at this time? There are certain circumstances in which some goals aren't a good idea. If you're caring for a sick family member, going to school, and working full-time, that might not be the right time to become vegetarian. Perhaps the smaller goal of increasing veggies and fruits would be better.

REALISTIC

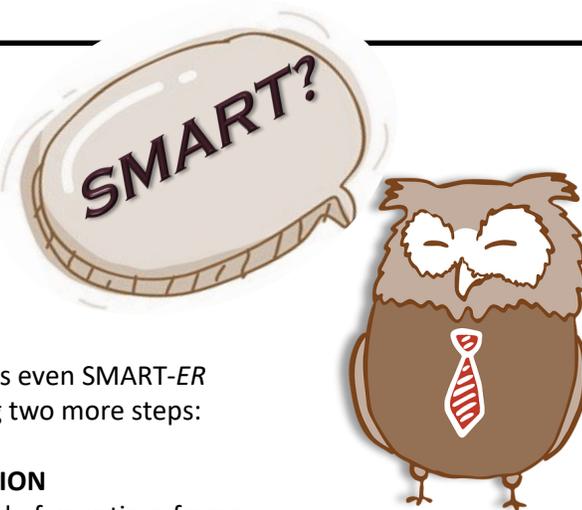
Ask yourself, "Given my current desires, resources, and limitations do I have a reasonable chance of reaching this goal?" Look for the sweet-spot of challenging enough that you're stretching and growing but not so difficult that you feel overwhelmed. You get stronger when you put forth effort, but constant struggling just wears you out.

TIME BOUND

Putting a time-frame around your goal can help keep you moving forward. If there's never an end-point, then you never actually have to get started.

Here's how a SMART goal for increasing produce consumption might look:

I currently eat 1 serving of vegetable and 1 serving of fruit each day. Next week, I will add an additional serving of vegetables each day. The following week, I'll add a daily serving of fruit. The week after that, I'll add another serving of veggies each day. In 3 weeks, I'll be eating 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruits every day.



Some people make their goals even SMART-ER by adding two more steps:

EVALUATION

At the end of your time-frame, compare your actual outcome with the goal you set. If they don't match up, that's not failure - it's just results and information. Take that new data and then....

REVIEW

Go over the process. Analyze what worked and what didn't. What made things harder? What did you learn? What would you change to make it more likely you'll succeed? Did you need additional time, resources, accountability, or support? How can you build what you need into the next phase of planning? Progress, not perfection, is the real goal!

Remember the Rewards

Making change can be difficult at times. Giving yourself a pat on the back is important. Be as kind and encouraging to yourself as you would to a friend that was working toward a new habit. Make sure the rewards you choose are:

- Proportionate to the amount of effort you have to put in to reach your target.
- Something that will support the goal you've reached, not sabotage it.
- Something that you actually want and feels special, not something that you're going to get anyway.
- Keep intrinsic rewards in mind. These are things that are a natural result of moving towards your goal. For instance, an intrinsic reward of eating more veggies and fruits is that you'll feel better and have more energy.

Would you like someone to help you walk through this process? The Behavioral Health Consultants here at Sawtooth Mountain Clinic can help you fine-tune your SMART goals. Call 218-387-2330 for an appointment.

"IT MUST BE BORNE IN MIND THAT THE TRAGEDY OF LIFE DOESN'T LIE IN NOT REACHING YOUR GOAL. THE TRAGEDY LIES IN HAVING NO GOALS TO REACH."

— BENJAMIN E. MAYS