Chapter 15: Goal Setting
Session Outline

• Defining goals and types of goals
• Why goal setting works
• Principles of goal setting
• Group goals
• Designing a goal-setting system
• Common problems in goal setting
Defining Goals and Types of Goals

- **Subjective goals**: General statements of intent such as having fun or doing your best

- **Objective goals (scientific definition)**: Attaining a specific standard of proficiency on a task, usually in a specified time

- **Outcome goals**: Focus on a competitive result of an event (e.g., beating someone)
Defining Goals and Types of Goals (continued)

- **Performance goals**: Focus on achieving standards of performance or objectives independently of other competitors—usually making comparisons with one’s own previous performance.

- **Process goals**: Focus on the actions an individual must engage in during performance to execute or perform well.
Goal Types and Behavior Change

- Outcome, performance, and process goals all play roles in behavior change. The key is knowing where to focus each goal.
- Don’t focus all your attention on outcome goals.
- Use a combination of all three types of goals.
Goal Types and Behavior Change

(continued)

• Outcome goals can facilitate short-term motivation but often lead to anxiety before and during competition.

• Performance and process goals are more precise than outcome goals and less dependent on the behavior of others.
Goal Types and Behavior Change (continued)

• Performance and process goals are particularly useful before or during competition (on rare occasions).

• Too much focus on a specific performance goal (e.g., running a personal best) can create anxiety.

• Process goals have all the advantages of performance goals.
Is Goal Setting Effective?

• Research in business and general psychology has shown that goal setting works extremely well in enhancing performance.

• Goal-setting effectiveness has been demonstrated in studies with more than 40,000 participants using over 90 tasks and across 20 countries.
Goal-Setting Research

• Meta-analyses (statistical reviews of the literature) show that goal setting works.

• In sport and exercise psychology, goal setting has been shown to work well, although not quite as well as it does in business.
Goal-Setting Research (continued)

• Almost all athletes use some type of goal setting to enhance performance.

• Top three goals for athletes:
  – Improving performance
  – Winning
  – Enjoyment

• Athletes prefer moderately difficult, difficult, and very difficult goals.
Goal-Setting Research (continued)

- **Major goal barriers for college athletes:** Lack of time, stress, fatigue, academic pressure, and social relationships

- **Major goal barriers for Olympians:** Lack of confidence, lack of goal feedback, too many goals or conflicting goals, lack of time, work commitments, and family and personal relationships
Goal-Setting Research (continued)

- Females set goals more often and find them more effective than men do.
- Athletes do not systematically write down goals.
- The more experience athletes have with goal setting, the better they are at developing effective goal-setting strategies.
Goal-Setting Research (continued)

- Athletes set goals to provide direction and help them stay focused.
- Athletes using multiple goal strategies exhibit the best performance.
- Individual differences must be considered.
Why Goal Setting Works

• **Indirect thought process view:** Goals influence performance indirectly by affecting psychological factors, such as anxiety, confidence, and satisfaction.

• **Direct mechanistic explanation:** Goals
  – direct attention to the important elements of the skill,
  – mobilize performers’ efforts,
  – prolong performers’ persistence, and
  – foster the development of new learning strategies.

(continued)
Why Goal Setting Works (continued)

- **Goals influence psychological states:** Athletes who set performance (rather than outcome) goals have less anxiety and more confidence and satisfaction.
Principles of Goal Setting

- Set specific goals.
- Set moderately difficult but realistic goals.
- Set long- and short-term goals.
- Set performance and process goals as well as outcome goals.
- Set practice and competition goals.
- Record goals.

(continued)
Principles of Goal Setting (continued)

- Develop goal achievement strategies.
- Consider participants’ personalities and motivations.
- Foster an individual’s goal commitment.
- Provide goal support.
- Provide evaluation of and feedback about goals.
Principles of Goal Setting (continued)

• **Set specific goals.**
  – Specific goals, as compared with general “do your best” goals, are most effective for producing behavioral change.
  – General goal: Reduce cholesterol.
  – Specific goal: Reduce cholesterol from 290 to 200 by… [how].

• **Set moderately difficult but realistic goals.**
  – Specific goal: Reduce cholesterol from 290 to 200 by… [how].
Principles of Goal Setting (continued)

• **Set long- and short-term goals.**
  – Use goal staircases that link long- and short-term goals.

• **Set performance and process goals as well as outcome goals.**
  – For every outcome goal, set several performance and process goals that will lead to the desired outcome.
Principles of Goal Setting (continued)

• Set practice and competition goals.

• Record goals.
  – “Ink it, don’t think it.”

• Develop goal achievement strategies.
  – Strategies include how much and how often things will be done in an effort to achieve a goal. Be flexible, however.
Principles of Goal Setting (continued)

• Consider participants’ personalities and motivations.
  – Consider factors such as achievement motivation (high versus low achievers), stages of achievement motivation, social comparison, task or ego orientation, and dispositional hope when setting goals.
  – Motivational climate also influences goal-setting effectiveness.

(continued)
Principles of Goal Setting (continued)

• **Foster an individual’s goal commitment.**
  – Promote goal commitment by encouraging progress and providing consistent feedback. Solicit the athlete’s or exerciser’s input.

• **Provide goal support.**
  – Enlist support from significant others to make goal setting effective.

• **Provide evaluation of and feedback about goals.**
  – Goal evaluation and feedback are essential parts of facilitating behavioral change via goal setting.
**Table 15.1**  
Forms of Goal Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Goal evaluation strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lose 20 pounds in 6 months</td>
<td>Client informs fitness instructor of weight each week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase free-throw shooting percentage from 65% to 72% by the end of the season</td>
<td>Team manager charts free-throw percentage statistics after each game and calculates year-to-date free-throw average.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend injury rehabilitation clinic 3 days a week until recovery</td>
<td>Attendance is posted weekly at rehabilitation center, and coach is notified of attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve concentration levels during practice</td>
<td>Coach gives player weekly report card, rating practice concentration on a 0 (low) to 10 (high) scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve class cooperation in elementary school physical education class</td>
<td>Teacher tallies cooperative acts on behavioral checklist during week and charts the improvement of various classes on gym bulletin board.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SMARTS Goals

- Specific
- Measureable
- Action oriented
- Realistic
- Timely
- Self-determined
Designing a Goal-Setting System

• **Instructor’s preparation and planning**
  – Assess abilities and needs.
  – Set goals in diverse areas.
  – Identify influences on goal-setting systems (athlete’s commitment, potential, and opportunity for practice).
  – Plan goal achievement strategies.

(continued)
Designing a Goal-Setting System (continued)

• Education and acquisition
  – Schedule meetings.
  – Focus on one goal (initially).

• Implementation and follow-up
  – Identify appropriate goal evaluation strategies.
  – Provide support and encouragement.
  – Plan for goal reevaluation.
Outcome Goals in Behavior Change

• Goals can be set in many areas, including individual, team, and psychological skills.
• See table 15.2 on p. 356 of text for sample goals.
Common Problems in Goal Setting

• Convincing students, athletes, and exercisers to set goals
• Failing to set specific goals
• Setting too many goals too soon
• Failing to adjust goals
• Failure to recognize individual differences
• Not providing goal follow-up and evaluation