

5 Facts about goal setting

1. **Specific, realistic goals work best.** When it comes to making a change, the people who succeed are those who set realistic, specific goals. "I'm going to recycle all my plastic bottles, cans, and magazines" is a much more doable goal than "I'm going to do more for the environment." And that makes it easier to stick with.
2. **It takes time for a change to become an established habit.** It will probably take a couple of months before any changes — like getting up half an hour early to exercise — become a routine part of your life. That's because your brain needs time to get used to the idea that this new thing you're doing is part of your regular routine.
3. **Repeating a goal makes it stick.** Say your goal out loud each morning to remind yourself of what you want and what you're working for. (Writing it down works too.) Every time you remind yourself of your goal, you're training your brain to make it happen.
4. **Pleasing other people doesn't work.** The key to making any change is to find the desire within yourself — you have to do it because you want it, not because a girlfriend, boyfriend, boss, parent, or someone else wants you to. It will be harder to stay on track and motivated if you're doing something out of obligation to another person.
5. **Roadblocks don't mean failure.** Slip-ups are actually part of the learning process as you retrain your brain into a new way of thinking. It may take a few tries to reach a goal. But that's OK — it's normal to mess up or give up a few times when trying to make a change. So remember that everyone slips up and don't beat yourself up about it. Just remind yourself to get back on track.