



Set goals, but focus on the milestones

11 January 2023

Here's to 2023. A new year always gives us a fresh start. And often we need that. Especially after the last three years which have been traumatic for almost all of us.

Now this is often a time of setting goals. And I do want you to set goals because setting and achieving goals is how we get ahead. Wishing and hoping for something doesn't work. You need to decide what you want to achieve and then go for it. What I want you to do, however, is set the goal and focus on the milestones. If your goal is going to take some time – more than 2 or 3 months to achieve, then you need to create milestones along the way. If you have the right milestones in place then following them and ticking them off once they are done will see your goal automatically achieved once the last milestone is completed. Goals, because they are in the future and can take a long time to achieve, can at times demotivate us. The path to achieving goals is seldom smooth. Life will give you detours and rough terrain. Goals take time to achieve. We like instant results, or at the very least we want to see progress quickly, so it is easy to think "I will never reach this goal" and give up. One way to make it much easier to achieve your goals is to keep your focus on your milestones.

So, what is a milestone? Let us have a look at some examples.

Let us say your goal is to get a new job. Milestones are the steps required for you to take to achieve your goal. For finding a new job the typical milestones could be:

- *Decide on the job you want*
- *Write up a professional looking CV and cover letter and LinkedIn profile*
- *Contact agencies*
- *Tell all your contacts that you are looking for a job*
- *Spend 4 hours a week on the internet reviewing job openings and applying for jobs*
- *Hone up on and practice interviewing skills*

Then keep the goal in mind but focus on the milestone. No matter how challenging achieving the goal gets, you are going to be focusing on achieving milestones which is easier and quicker and makes you more likely to stay motivated and keep going.

If your goal is to be able to run a 10km race then you could have milestones as follows (assuming you are not able to run at all at the moment).

- *Walk for 15 minutes four times for a week.*
- *Walk 30 minutes four times in the week.*
- *For three weeks run/walk for 30 minutes*
- *For three weeks run/walk for 40 minutes*
- *Next step*
- *Next step*
- *.....*
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And so on. There are professionally put together programmes on how to do this and I am not a fitness coach so rather consult one of the fitness or running professionals for how to do this. The main thing is keep your goal in mind, but focus on the milestones and mark off each milestone that is achieved. It helps to keep you motivated. Therefore once you have written down your goal (and you want to write it down), write down the steps, the milestones you need to reach to get there. You want quite a few milestones. At least six to eight. Ideally you want to be able to reach a milestone every two weeks.

If you are not sure of the milestones to come up with for your goal then talk to someone who has achieved your goal already. Ask them what the steps were they took to achieve their goal. Then go and write down your own milestones.

In life we focus so much on goals. And that is good. Achieving goals not only means we have achieved the goal we set for ourselves, it also means we have built our confidence and sense of competence, and are now able to set more and more difficult goals to achieve. However, if anything is more important than goals, it is taking actions. Taking action is really what is needed for success. As long as you take action you are moving forward. Even if the action takes you in a direction you realise is wrong, you have still learned something and you know more to help you on your path to achieving your goal. Yes, goals are great. But nothing happens without taking action. So this year, more than anything else, focus on and reward yourself for taking action. For achieving milestones. That is the key to making life work for you.