

MANC

Mutually Assured Non Complacency



Behaviorally-Informed Goal Setting & Accountability Strategies

COMMIT IN WRITING. Create a contract between the present and future you.

1 Identify a goal.

This could be a regular habit (i.e. going to the gym; writing in your journal daily; cutting down on sugar) or a Big Hairy Goal (i.e. getting a new job; finding a romantic partner; buying a house). Be specific in both the “what” and “when” in describing this goal. Answer these questions:

HABITS: What do you want to do, how frequently and when will you do it?

BIG GOALS: What do you want to do, when do you want to do it by and when will you know you're done?

EXAMPLE:

“I want to go to the gym 4 times/week” or, “I want to get a new job within 2 months” “I want to meet a significant other within 3 months” “I want to start a daily writing habit”

NOTE:

Don't get too crazy here. Try to be realistic about your goal. Small milestones are the move. If you never work out, don't make a goal to do it every day. If you have a big work deliverable, don't make a goal to start a new habit. You'll be too distracted.

PRO TIP: Get uncomfortably specific.



2 Flesh it out. Setting yourself up for success.

Set a timeline and describe the actions you're going to take to get there. Get very specific. (Don't be afraid to spend time on this part.) Talk it out. Explain to yourself how you'll get from here to there.

EXAMPLES:

“For the next 4 weeks, I will go to the gym do 45 min of cardio exercise every Sun, Tues, Thurs, and Sat. I'm blocking off time in my calendar now. I'll prep my gym bag the night before and put it in my car, so on weekdays I can go to the gym right from work.”

“For the next 2 months, every Monday and Wednesday at 3pm I will stop normal work and focus on my resume/looking for jobs. I will apply to ~3 jobs a week (at least). I am going to email my friend Brenda and Jim (right now!) and ask for feedback on my resume and LinkedIn. I'll tell them my goals.

PRO TIP: block off time in your calendar now! Pick a milestone every month. At this milestone, you should stop doing what you're doing if it's not working. No need to beat yourself up — change goals. If it is working OK, figure out how to tweak your goal.





3 EXAMPLES FOR HOW PEOPLE LOCK THEMSELVES INTO THEIR GOALS:

Jess wanted to test out a startup idea. This was a 3+ month goal. To lock herself in, within the first month she posted 3 eventbrites for potential customers to try out her service. This was a forcing function for her to create the marketing materials and cost structure.

Rick wanted to find a romantic partner. To lock himself in to devoting time, he immediately sent an email to friends asking for their help to be matched.


Lisa wanted to redesign two side websites she hadn't been maintaining. To ensure it would happen, within a week she hired and pre-paid a professional designer for set timelines.

EXAMPLES:

"Some days I may work late or make last-minute plans. If that happens, I commit to going to the gym before work the next morning"

"Sometimes I'm too hungry to work out after work. I'm going to start taking a snack to work to have around 4pm"

"Sometimes I get discouraged by applying for jobs. You don't hear anything for weeks and so I slow down on my applications. It's discouraging. So I'm going to ask my friends to remind me it's worth it"

 **PRO TIP:** You may not be an objective source. Ask a friend what they think will get in your way. People like being asked for advice.

3 Do One Time Actions.

Want to actually succeed? Do something right now. These are called "one-time actions". One-time actions lock your future self in to the desired behavior.

What do you want to do RIGHT NOW?! to lock in your momentum?

4 Consider obstacles.

What challenges might come up along the way? What will you do to prevent and deal with them if they arise? Tip: "not having enough time" is a common obstacle. What will you give up to make time for your new goal? Also consider why haven't you done this before. What got in your way?



5 Add stakes.

Raise the price of failure. You can choose to risk money or your reputation. No cheap talk.

FINANCIAL STAKES: Put your money where your mouth is. Try <https://www.stickk.com>.

REPUTATION RISK: Tell someone you admire about your goal. Pre plan an event where you share your progress with them.

MONEY EXAMPLE:

"For every week that I don't meet my goal, I'll donate \$10 to a political party I despise."

REPUTATION EXAMPLE:

"I will plan a dinner with my friends for two months from now to celebrate getting a new job. I'll send out mass invites now and let people know."

CONGRATS ON MAKING THE COMMITMENT!

RAISE THE PRICE OF YOUR VICE

Making your commitment public adds social pressure to stay accountable. Why? They may ask you how it's going, and you wouldn't want to reveal that you have failed. By telling someone else your goal, it becomes real - and it becomes fun. You're sharing your life with another person. This can create conversation and connection.

The best thing you can do for yourself and your goals is share them with others.

STAY ACCOUNTABLE

6 Accountability.

Self-reporting is a good way to track progress, but chances of success are much higher with an accountability partner. Choose someone to share your reports with. If stakes are on the line, give this person the authority to decide whether you're compliant.

Accountability Partner:

Contact Info:

Reporting Plan:

EXAMPLE: "I'll text Evelyn after each workout. If I don't text Evelyn, we agree that she'll donate money to charity she doesn't like!"

(See what we did there? You wouldn't want to make Evelyn pay for your mistakes)



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Make a Monitoring Plan.

Given your timeline, how often will you check your progress (daily, weekly)? Who will you tell after reaching the first month? When? Set date. Who will you tell for the 2nd and 3rd? When? Set date. If you have an ounce of momentum now, set up reminders for yourself to do the thing you said you'd do, and then set up reminders with yourself to check in on yourself! Seems silly we know, but this is the key. For example, send yourself a calendar invite for Sunday AMs — give yourself one hour to assess your goals and then permission to change the system.

EXAMPLE:

"Every Monday after dinner I'll call Evelyn to evaluate whether I went to the gym 4 times in the prior week. If not, that's when the \$10 gets paid."

Reminder: Monday - Friday go to the gym

Calendar Invite: Monday at 7pm to call Evelyn.

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Turn up the social dial.

In addition to adding reputational stakes, how will you add a social component to your goal? Hint: it's both fun and effective to invite people to cheer you on! You can share your commitment and progress with friends on social media (you'd be surprised how satisfying this is), and invite them to share inspiration, tips and tricks. You can also set up events or dinners in advance that lock you in.

We know all this may sound scary. But change is not easy, otherwise you would already have done the thing you're talking about. Failure is easy. Success takes a bit more work.

EXAMPLE:

"I'll post my goal on FB and give weekly updates. Will also take fun selfies at the gym and post them, too. My aunt loves commenting on them."

You can join social groups and network with people (online) who've already done the task you want to complete. Just being around others who have achieved the same goal will make the task seem much more attainable. You will also see all the future benefits of achieving your goal.