

## Family Goal Setting for the Entire Year

It's that time of the year, people reflect on the past year and now in the new year make resolutions for 2010. Maybe you planned to lose weight, get out of debt, or put away some money for a new car. These ideas, we call resolutions, are really just goals we set for ourselves. The new year is a great time to set those goals, but it can really be done anytime throughout the year.

Setting goals is a good idea for the whole family. As a parent you can set goals for yourself and in turn show your children how to do the same. Setting goals with your children allows you to set a good example for them and to follow through as a family with the goals you set.

Setting goals with your children can be a little different than coming up with your own goals. Here are some things to think about when setting goals with your children:

**Start with the familiar** - Look for ways that your family already uses goal-setting techniques. For example if you notice that your child has managed to save up their money to buy a toy they really wanted; discuss the steps taken to get the toy. Use examples like this to identify the techniques that can be used to meet other challenges.

**Start small and build up** - When starting the process look for a goal that can be easily achieved. If the process of goal setting starts with an easy success it will create an enthusiasm that they can associate with the process of goal setting. Maybe they could finish a book they started reading. Finishing a series of small goals can help you and your children build up to bigger goals in the future. Be careful when suggesting deadlines or time limits. As parents months fly by in no time at all, but to a child two weeks may seem like an eternity. Be sensitive to the age of your child when talking with him about time frames.

**Let them decide** - As much as you might want your child to get all A's in their second semester, it is best to let them decide what they want to achieve. Obviously, some goals require more input from you. If making the local basketball team is your child's dream you may have to help them set and achieve their targets. Once your child has established goals be sure to write them down. To make the process of achievement easier write down not only the goal itself, but also why it is important and what achieving it will mean.

**Monitor the effort** - Spend some time each week checking on your family's progress. Are you and your children on task to achieve your goals? Children often underestimate how hard it can be to meet a goal, and then they get frustrated and discouraged when they fall short. If your child decides he wants to play the guitar, for instance, be encouraging but realistic. If they are having problems achieving a goal review the goal with your child. Maybe it was too vague or too ambitious. Ask your child for suggestions. Children are more likely to follow through on their own ideas about what else they can do. Compliment them on their success, even if it is small.

**Applaud their effort** - Even if your child doesn't get the result they hoped for, make sure to praise them for trying. Don't use threats or bribes. Offering a prize in exchange for a positive result or a punishment for a negative result helps your children follow-through in the long run. Saying something like, "I'm really impressed. When you care about something you really go after it!" can make a child feel good about their efforts. Once a young person has success in setting goals they will strive to achieve bigger goals.

It is always important that you are an example for your child. Set a good example by having written goals of your own. Let your children see the things you are working toward and discuss your successes and failures.

The New Year is a great time to start this process, but setting goals with your family once a year is not enough. Now that the New Year is under way and most of your resolutions or goals have not been met start new and make your New Year Goals your New Month Goals. Reviewing and writing goals more often will allow you and your children excitement, anticipation

and motivation that comes with the New Year twelve times in 2010 rather than just once! For information on this or other youth development topics please contact the University of Missouri Extension Office in Henry County at 660-885-5556.

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