

GOALS –Plan for Success

Once a goal is chosen, our mind has many behind-the-scenes processes that help promote its pursuit. Unfulfilled tasks and incomplete goals remain active and persistent in the mind until they are fulfilled.

When does this subside? The obvious answer is when the goal is attained or when you decide to just stop pursuing it.

Having a plan is a great way to relieve our mind of tension as we essentially turn it over to the unconscious. Intrusive thoughts can relentlessly remind people of their unfulfilled goals, including to the point of interfering with other tasks. However, specific plans free cognitive resources for other pursuits.

A specific plan is like a script that a person can follow mindlessly to completion even when our mental resources are low or we are stressed or distracted.

MAKING A PLAN:

WHAT to do, WHEN to do it, WHERE to do it, and HOW we will respond

(“If X happens, I will do Y”)

- Plan for the Day
 - Plan for the Week
 - Plan for a Creative Project
 - Plan for Coping
 - Plan for Getting Physical Activity
 - Plan for Cleaning
 - Plan for Meals for the Week
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- ✓ Make a List
 - ✓ Prioritize by ranking the importance of each task
 - ✓ How much time do you need for each task?
 - ✓ When will you do it?
 - ✓ What specifically do you need to do?

Once a detailed plan has been made, we no longer need to think about the goal to execute it. The unconscious knows how and when to act, and so in a sense the uncertainty of the unfinished task is resolved.

This also helps with self-regulation, stress management, and managing multiple goals at once. We know what needs to get done, when we will do it, how we will do it, and in what order. And, this increases our odds of attaining our goals rather than leaving us feeling overwhelmed by the numerous steps or tasks or being bombarded by the mental reminders.

(Zeigarnik, 1927) (Forster et al., 2007)