

Let's talk about goals!

Goals help us to form a roadmap to success. They push us to focus on gaining knowledge and organizing time and resources to pursue a challenge. Once you know exactly what you want to achieve, you can direct your energy towards that pursuit and also identify things that may lead you off course. Setting and reaching goals is a great way for runners to stay motivated. Some goals may be competitive, some might be personal and others health related. Each individual has their own driving force!

One commonly used method of goal setting is the SMART Method. This method is used by coaches, business leaders, educators and others to assist people in reaching performance targets. The SMART Method is made up of five components:

S- SPECIFIC
M- MEASURABLE
A- ATTAINABLE
R- RELEVANT
T- TIME BOUND

SPECIFIC: A specific goal is defined by precise terms. In other words, state EXACTLY what you want to accomplish.

EXAMPLE: I will run my first 5K in 12 weeks at the Fargo Marathon 5K.

MEASURABLE: In order for a goal to be measurable, you need to define how you will track your progress and how you will know when you've reached your target. When specific criteria is defined, you have the ability to regularly check progress. This is helpful for maintaining motivation. It's very encouraging to compare a workout in week one of your training plan with the same workout in week 8 of your training plan. Seeing improvement helps to keep everyone on track.

EXAMPLE: I will follow a 5K training plan consisting of 4 runs/week and 2 strength training sessions/week.

ATTAINABLE: Is it within reach? It's important to choose a goal that you will be able to accomplish if you're willing to put in the work. The best goals require you to push yourself outside your comfort zone but are also within the realm of possibility. If the goal is too far out of reach, you are far more likely to give up because you know it's not achievable. Look at previous running achievements. Think about your current fitness level. Do you have to make considerable improvements (perhaps beyond your ability) to get to that goal? Talk to a coach or running friends if you're feeling unsure.

EXAMPLE: If I train for the Fargo 5K for 12 weeks, I will be prepared. I will need to put my training schedule on my calendar and purchase new running shoes.

RELEVANT: For a goal to be relevant, it needs to be something that you consider to be important. It should be personal, meaningful and something you want to achieve for yourself, not to meet someone else's expectations

EXAMPLE: I am setting this goal to challenge myself to run consistently and improve my overall fitness!

TIME BOUND: Time bound goals have a set and defined time frame and a deadline. Having a deadline keeps motivation high and hopefully prevents boredom or skipping workouts. To work forward toward a big goal, it may be helpful to set shorter-term goals. These may be monthly, weekly or even day by day.

EXAMPLE: I will register for the Fargo 5K on May 8th!

Here are a couple of other items to consider:

What motivation and accountability techniques can I use to stay consistent? For some runners, it's enough to tell a few close people about your goal. It can help with accountability to have others checking in with you. I have also known runners who pay themselves per mile during a training period and then reward themselves with a shopping spree after they reach their goal. It may take some trial and error, but finding what works for you will be worth it.

What resources do I have if I get stuck along the way and have questions? Chances are you've got a friend or acquaintance who has some running experience. You can always reach out to me if you've got questions. If I don't have the answer, I've got LOTS of contacts who know more than me who can help!

I would encourage you to consider setting a goal! Once you've set your goal, write it out and post it in a place where you can see it on a regular basis. Putting a goal on paper and making it visible can help to inspire commitment. No matter what your running goal is, have fun with it!!