



What are SMART goals?³

| S | Specific | Clear, short and to the point, so you'll know what you're aiming for. | Examples of SMART goals: | EXAMPLES of Unrealistic or Poorly Defined Goals: |
|----------|------------------------|---|--|--|
| M | Measurable | Able to be easily measured, so you'll know when you get there. | "I want to reduce my pain from 8/10 to 7/10 so I can vacuum my living room within 4 weeks after starting treatment." | "I want to completely get rid of my pain." (unrealistic) |
| A | Action oriented | Based on actions you can take that are within your direct control. | "I want to do some gardening for 15 minutes a day within 4 weeks after starting treatment." | "I want to have less pain." (poorly defined) |
| R | Realistic | Small steps that are within your reach. Choose something you're 90% confident you can do. | "I want to be able to walk my dog around the block each day within 4 weeks after starting treatment." | "I want to function better." (poorly defined) |
| T | Time-based | Tied to a deadline. | | |

How do I know what's realistic?

| Things you can measure if a treatment works | What's realistic? | What may not be realistic? |
|---|---|--|
| Pain (often measured to know on a scale of 0 to 10) | Up to a 30% reduction in pain (for example, if your pain is 7/10, it could go down to a 5/10). ⁴ | Zero pain (for example, if your pain is 7/10, it's unlikely to go down to 0/10). |
| Function (ability to do daily activities) | Small, gradual improvements in function and your ability to cope. Focus on what you can do now that you couldn't do a few months ago (rather than comparing to what you could do before the pain started). | Being able to do everything you did before the pain started. Expecting all pain to be gone before you can work on your goals for improving your ability to do daily activities. |
| Side effects | Side effects that don't interfere too much with your life. | Zero side effects. |

Pain myths and facts:¹

| Myth | Fact |
|---|--|
| All my pain must be gone before I can start doing physical activity or working on my SMART goals. | Pain may never be gone, but you can still learn to be physically active safely, and to make slow and steady progress towards your SMART goals. |
| Pain causes long-term harm to my body. | While pain can be the body's way to tell us something is wrong, it's different with chronic pain. Pain should not stop you from working on your SMART goals. |
| The main focus of my treatment is to relieve pain. | Focus more on your ability to function than on your pain. Aim for small, gradual improvements in your ability to function. |
| My treatment should get my pain to zero. | Treatment is not likely to get you to zero pain. That's why it's so important to learn coping strategies. |
| I can expect to make the same amount of progress each day. | You'll have good days and bad days, but it's the overall progress over time that matters. |

References

- [1] Mirgain SA, Singles J. *Goal setting for pain rehabilitation clinical tool*. Whole Health Library: University of Wisconsin Madison School of Medicine and Public Health. 2016.
- [2] Henry SG, Bell RA, Fenton JJ, Kravitz RL. Goals of chronic pain management: Do patients and primary care physicians agree and does it matter? *Clin J Pain* 2017;33(11): 955-961.
- [3] Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense. Clinical practice guideline for opioid therapy for chronic pain. 2017;3.
- [4] Scottish Intercollegiate Guideline Network (SIGN). Sign guideline 136: Management of chronic pain. 2013.

Example categories for SMART goals:

- Exercise, physical activity
- Relaxation, meditation, quieting responses
- Social support, social activity
- Meaningful activities (work, volunteer, responsibilities to family/community)
- Pleasurable activities (hobbies, interest, diversions, distractions, social)
- Attitude, mood, thinking

SMART goal (short-term):

| | Progress | Barrier(s) | Solution(s) |
|-------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Date: | | | |
| Date: | | | |
| Date: | | | |
| Date: | | | |
| Date: | | | |

SMART goal (long-term):

| | Progress | Barrier(s) | Solution(s) |
|-------|----------|------------|-------------|
| Date: | | | |
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