

Lesson 27 - Goal Setting (Part 1)

A client will come to you to either solve a problem or achieve a goal. Even if the client wants to solve a problem he has a goal of healing or resolution. So all coaching sessions involve reaching to attain a goal.

Like the two levels of content and process, there are two levels of goal setting: (1) the logistical level, and (2) the experiential level. Most goal setting lessons and practices address the logistical level only. Yet they fail to recognize that, even more than the ostensible goal, the client is seeking an experience. A client can accomplish all of her logistical goals, but if she does not meet her experiential goal, she has achieved little. If she achieves her experiential goal, she has accomplished what really matters and is in a better position to achieve her logistical goal.

Anyone who wants anything, whether it is increased income, a career achievement, a rewarding relationship, optimum health, or spiritual enlightenment desires the goal because he believes it will bring him a particular feeling or experience. While many coaches can help an individual set and attain a goal, most do not ask the basic question, “Why do you want it?”

I had a client (I’ll call) Karen, who could never achieve enough. She was wealthy, attractive, highly respected in her profession, had a loving husband, devoted family, and fine home. Yet as a child Karen was trained that she had to be perfect, and if she did not toe the (unreachable) mark, she had failed. So Karen set out on an exhausting quest to attain endless accolades and degrees. Each accomplishment made her happy for a while, but then the old angst of “I need to do more to be valued” set in, and she was on the treadmill again.

In coaching I worked with Karen not on how to get the next degree, although I supported her to progress in her work and I congratulated her for her achievements as they came. Instead, I approached our sessions with the intention for Karen to find value and worth in herself just as she was, even if she never got another degree. Her shift toward inner peace was profound, and we enjoyed a long coaching relationship in which she kept going deeper and deeper in self-acceptance and self-honoring. A willing client, she made magnificent strides. Ultimately Karen’s greatest achievement was not outside herself, but within.

How to Help Clients Set and Achieve Goals:

1. Help your client identify her goal by reading her passion level as she speaks and reflecting to her what your sensor indicates.
2. Be his cheerleader to remind him that he is capable and worthy of having what he wants, and inspire him to move toward it.
3. Help her apportion the journey toward the goal into doable steps, and map the first or next step toward it.
4. Be his check-in person to keep him on track with any commitments he makes to take action toward the goal.
5. Keep her aware and focused on her inner emotional or spiritual process as she moves toward her material goal. Remind her that the real goal is inner peace.

Characteristics of a Healthy Goal:

A material or logistical goal should be:

1. Exciting to the client, chosen out of passion and joy rather than fear, guilt, obligation, or routine.
2. A step beyond the client's current level of attainment.
3. A stretch beyond the client's comfort zone.
4. Believable and doable as perceived by both you and the client, not so outrageous that it is in the realm of fantasy alone.

Timelines and Deadlines:

Timelines and deadlines can be helpful, but not for the obvious reason they are chosen. On a surface level, deadlines can help get things done that might languish for a long time or never get done at all. Some people get motivated if they have a deadline coming up, and they swing into effective action. Sometimes when a person realizes something absolutely needs to be done, he drops resistance and just does it. A deadline also helps mobilize focus and intention, absolute prerequisites for success in any project.

On the other hand, there is a reason they call it a “deadline.” Lots of people are deadened or depleted of life force by straining to meet deadlines. It’s more fun in coaching to substitute a term like “completion date,” “success date,” or “goal line.” Try to reframe “deadline” as a point of vision that stimulates the client with all the rewards and good feelings she will enjoy when the goal is finally accomplished.

Also get a sense of where the “deadline” is coming from. Is this a fact of life that just has to be done? Is it a project that the client has chosen with inspiration? Has the client made up a story that he needs to do this, when he might not need to do it? Does the goal issue from joy, or from fear? Is it realistic and doable? Is the client more likely to struggle and suffer with pressure and guilt, or to be motivated and empowered?

Specific or General Goal:

How specific or general should a goal be? Should you intend to earn \$200,000 by the end of this year, or just intend to make enough money in the right time to have your needs and joys met? The answer is this: Be as specific as possible as long as the goal still feels empowering. If your client can set a specific goal that uplifts her to think about it, go for it. If that specific goal conjures fear or resistance, step back to a more general experiential goal that lets the client breathe and stay excited.

The Hidden Value of Goal Setting:

Setting material or logistical goals brings inner issues to the surface; the closer you come to a goal or its appointed completion date, the more those issues arise. Am I worth having this goal? Can I get it? Will achieving this goal rock my known world? Will it change my identity as I see myself? Will I feel guilty about doing or getting this? How do I deal with jealousy or envy from others? How will this affect my relationship(s)?

When these questions arise, you are in a prime position to help your client. While he thought he was on a material journey, he is more fundamentally on a spiritual journey. If you can key your client into this journey and assist him to answer the inner questions

4. Is this goal (1) within your current comfort and achievement zone, or (2) a stretch in achievement and/or beyond your current comfort zone; or (3) a huge leap that's out there and fun to think about, or (4) pretty unbelievable and likely impossible from where you now stand?

5. How specific can you make your goal without starting to feel anxious or resistant?

6. Do you have a completion date for this goal? If so, does the completion date motivate and inspire you, or does it bring a sense of pressure, burden, or obligation?

7. Returning to question 2 above, could you claim your desired experience right where you stand now?

Affirm:

**I use goal setting to generate spiritual growth as well as material success.
I help my clients achieve their inner and outer goals.**

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