

Sunflower Counseling Center

Learn to Set S.M.A.R.T. New Year's Resolutions



New Year, IMPROVED You!

We at Sunflower Counseling Center would like to take a moment to wish you a very HAPPY NEW YEAR! We thank you for allowing us to be a part of your healing journey and look forward to the great work we will do together in 2024.

The new year is often a time of reflection. We reflect on the high's and the low's from the previous year and find ourselves evaluating our life goals, relationships, finances, and other aspects of our lives. We hear much talk about New Year's resolutions. Too often we hear the saying "New year, New me," but what exactly does that mean? Why does a new year mean that we need to change ourselves, as if to imply that who we are isn't good enough.

Language matters and the way we speak to ourselves has an impact on our mindset and self-esteem. So, this year, I encourage you to focus on what you would like to *improve* rather than what you feel you need to *change*. In Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), we often speak about Dialectics or the concept that two opposing ideas can both be true. As you find yourself reflecting on 2023 and planning for 2024, I encourage you to remind yourself that who you are *IS* enough, and yet, it is ok to strive for self-growth.

There is no harm in setting New Year's resolutions. Setting and achieving meaningful goals can help us feel accomplished and confident in our abilities. However, all too often, we set goals that are not realistic, sustainable, or achievable. In this month's newsletter, we discuss how to set SMART goals so you can set yourself up for success in 2024.

Ideas for your New Year's Resolution:

- Choose to start a new healthy habit like going for daily walks or scheduling all your doctor appointments for the year.
- Start a new hobby like reading, painting, or hiking.
- Set a new financial goal such as paying off credit card debt or developing a monthly budget.
- Strengthen your relationships by planning 1 social outing per month.
- Spend more time taking care of YOU! Get a massage, meditate regularly, or plan a date with yourself.
- Challenge yourself to learn something new such as a new language or skill.
- Take a trip! Plan to visit at least 1 new place this year.
- Give back more in 2024. Volunteer your time or donate to a worthy cause.

Setting SMART Goals

“If the plan doesn’t work, change the plan, not the goal.” - Author Unknown

The key to accomplishing anything is knowing how to set a SMART goal. So, how do we know our goal is SMART? Check out the steps below to learn how to set SMART goals for your New Year’s resolution.

S- Is it Specific?

- * Make your goals specific in order to develop a more effective plan for achieving it. For example, instead of setting a goal to simply read more, consider something more specific, such as “I would like to read a book from a new genre I haven’t read before.”

M- Is it Measurable?

- * To track your progress, your goal must also be measurable. How will you measure progress and when will you know your goal has been met? Here’s an example of a measurable goal: “I will read 3 books from 3 different genres this year.”

A- Is it Achievable?

- * You want to set yourself up for success. So take a moment to evaluate whether or not your goal is actually achievable and realistic. For example, I may not be able to read 20 books this year, but I can most likely read at least 3.



R- Is it Relevant?

- * Ask yourself, “Does this goal fit into my bigger picture?” Your time is valuable and you don’t want to waste it trying to achieve a goal that has no meaning to you. It’s important to explore how this goal aligns with your values, as well as your current needs and desires.

T- Is it Timely?

- * SMART goals are also timely. What time frame will you give yourself to accomplish your goal. When setting a timeframe for your goal we are looking for the “goldilocks” zone. Give yourself too much time and you may not feel motivated to make progress. However, setting too short of a timeframe may lead to increased stress and may cause you to give up on your goal. Setting a realistic timeframe will help you prioritize tasks and motivate you to make progress towards your goal.

DON'T LET THESE COMMON BARRIERS DERAIL YOUR GOALS:

- **Self-Doubt:** It is natural to have doubts when trying something new, but don’t let self-doubt derail your 2024 goals. Take a moment to identify 3 strengths you possess and 2 external supports (ie: Family member, Friend, or Mentor) that can help you reach your goal. If you believe it, you can achieve it!
- **Procrastination-** Why put off until tomorrow, what you can do today? Having a timeline for your goal can help create a healthy sense of urgency. Another tip for beating procrastination is to tell at least 3 people what your goal is. This will create a sense of accountability and make it more likely that you will stick to your plan.
- **Overwhelm-** When we set a new goal, it may feel very daunting at first. If we let it, this feeling of overwhelm can stop us in our tracks before we even start. To avoid feeling overwhelmed, break your goal up into smaller “bite-sized” pieces. Start with the smallest version of your goal. As you complete smaller tasks, you will start to build confidence and momentum that can carry you through as you see your goal through completion.