

## Family Goal Setting

When I look at people who achieve the most in life, they often have goals.

Why?

Goals energise. Goals create clarity and focus. Goals offer opportunity; things happen to enable success when you set a goal.

But there are some problems with goals.

The **first problem** is that they won't necessarily make you happy. Chasing the wrong kinds of goals (extrinsic) versus the right kinds of goals (intrinsic) is a sure-fire way to decrease your happiness, even while achieving the amazing.

The **second problem** is that goals often feel controlling. Rigid. And when we fail, we feel incompetent, and the self-castigation commences.

The **third problem** is that many of our goals involve other people. If they're not 'buying' the vision—if they're not all-in on the goal—not only is the goal unachievable, but relationships rupture.

The **fourth problem**—and perhaps the most challenging—is that many goals don't lend themselves to actually being goals. Having a happy family is hard to nail down into the SMART goal formula.

- How do you get specific on what happy means?
- How do you measure happiness in your family? And when?
- Is happiness all the time even achievable? Realistic?
- What about the time element? Happiness today isn't happiness forever.

There is no doubt that goals help us achieve. Evidence overwhelmingly supports this. But success with goal-setting, especially in family life, is more about a combination of knowing what you want and then *building the system to underpin it*.

Three things will sustain success in family goal setting and system building:

## 1. Start from the bottom up

Facilitate this through regular family meetings and asking questions like, “What’s going well? What needs improvement? What should be our focus?” By asking these questions, we empower children to contribute to family goal-setting.

## 2. Build a plan together

Two steps here. First, if you know you want more kindness (or better/more regular holidays), ask “how” and make the plan as simple as you can.

Next, track progress. This must be non-punitive. It’s not a reward system. Rewards feel controlling. Instead, make the accountability easy and fun with regular check-ins. In our family, we have a weekly 15-minute family meeting to discuss progress, reassess plans, and stay aligned.

## 3. Focus on being together

To a child, LOVE is spelled T-I-M-E. Systems will be followed and goals achieved when children feel involved, connected, and engaged *with you* as you follow the plan or system. If the goal is to climb a mountain, training together will be more effective than training alone. If the goal is more fun as a family, time on bikes or playing board games will be more effective than time spent in bedrooms.

When children actively participate in goal setting and experience autonomy, involvement with you, and moments of success and achievement, motivation is high, systems succeed, and your family is more likely to achieve.



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