Small Steps To Your Goals

When reading about goals, we often hear about short term, intermediate and long term goals. Each of these may have time frames connected with them. Examples could be a short-term goal of one to two years, mid-term goal of three to seven years and a long-term goal of 10 years. Unfortunately, these types of definitions do not take into consideration a person or family’s situation.

People and families who tend to plan and write down their goals are more likely to achieve them. How people and families define their goals is very different. Short term for one person could be one week, but for another it may be one hour or one month. Overall time frames should fit the needs of the person or family — not what some definition says.

A key to meeting goals is to make sure they are realistic and manageable. One way to make them manageable is to create small steps to reach the goal. Here is an activity to do with family members or in a group to visualize how small steps help people reach their goals.

Have everyone line up against a wall (with their backs against the wall). The goal is for everyone to get to the other side of the room. How do you get there? Is it possible to leap across the room in one big step? Probably not. So have everyone go across the room and count their steps.

Discuss the following:

- Did everyone reach the goal?
- How many steps did each person take?
- Did everyone reach the other side at the same time?
- Were there any obstacles (chairs, furniture, etc.)? How were those obstacles handled?
- Does anyone wish they had taken a different path?

Then discuss how this activity relates to setting and reaching goals in life. We have to decide on a goal and break it down into manageable small steps or tasks. Some people could accomplish a goal in five tasks, but another family member might need eight tasks to finish the same goal. If things get too challenging, people often quit. It might be that someone needs to rethink a goal and break it down into even smaller steps or give themselves more time to reach the goal.
One way to break a goal down into manageable, smaller steps is to write the goal and then write the steps to accomplish that goal. An example could look like this:

My goal is:
- Today, I will:
- Tomorrow, I will:
- By the end of the week, I will:

Another way could be breaking a large task into smaller tasks over a longer time frame.

Maybe your goal is to save for a summer trip and you need $400 to cover expenses, which is a huge amount to come up with at once for your budget. Try breaking the amount down by days and months. For example, you could set aside $3 a day for three and a half months or $2 a day for six to seven months. That may be much more doable than taking $400 out of the budget all at once.

Make things manageable for you and your family. Small steps make a big difference in helping you reach your goals!