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PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF GOAL-SETTING

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Abstract: The problem of goal-setting in psychology is being analyzed as an important tool for self-motivation. The article also reveals the benefits of goal-setting and implementing that knowledge in our day-to-day lives.

Keywords: goal-setting, mental health, fulfillment, personal abilities, achievements, failure, disappointments

Goal-setting in psychology is an essential tool for self-motivation and self-drivenness – both at personal and professional levels. It gives meaning to our actions and the purpose of achieving something higher.

By setting goals, we get a roadmap of where we are heading to and what is the right way that would lead us there. It is a plan that holds us in perspective – the more effectively we make the plan, the better are our chances of achieving what we aim to.

Setting goals are linked with higher motivation, self-esteem, self-confidence, and autonomy, and research has established a strong connection between goal-setting and success.

This article is all about understanding the benefits of goal-setting and implementing that knowledge in our day-to-day lives.

Effective goals are ones that are achievable, believable, committed. Goal-setting as a psychological tool for increasing productivity involves five rules or criterion, known as the S-M-A-R-T rule. George T. Doran coined this rule by far one of the most popular propositions of the psychology of goals.

S-M-A-R-T goals stand for:

S (Specific) – They target a particular area of functioning and focus on building it.

M (Measurable) -The results can be gauged quantitatively or at least indicated by some qualitative attributes. This helps in monitoring the progress after executing the plans.

A (Attainable/Achievable) – The goals are targeted to suitable people and are individualized. They take into account the fact that no single rule suits all, and are flexible in that regard.

R (Realistic) – They are practical and planned in a way that would be easy to implement in real life. The purpose of a smart goal is not just providing the plan, but also helping the person execute it.

T (Time-bound) – An element of time makes the goal more focused. It also provides a time frame about task achievement.

Goals play a dominant role in shaping the way we see ourselves and others. A person who is focused and goal-oriented is likely to have a more positive approach towards life and perceive failures as temporary setbacks, rather than personal shortcomings.

Tony Robbins, a world-famous motivational speaker, and coach had said that “Setting goals is the first step from turning the invisible to visible.”

Studies have shown that when we train our mind to think about what we want in life and work towards reaching it, the brain automatically rewires itself to acquire the ideal self-image and makes it an essential part of our identity. If we achieve the goal, we achieve fulfillment, and if we don't, our brain keeps nudging us until we achieve it.

Goal-setting gives a boost to our Systolic Blood Pressure which makes us readily act on it. When the goal is tricky and yet achievable, the SBP gets an enhanced spike that increases our zeal to act and achieve it.

Impossible or challenging goals, or the ones that make us question our abilities, are linked with low systolic thrust and they do not provide the spike for

ready action. Extensive studies have shown how neural connections and the brain activities pump up our motivation to set and achieve goals.

If the goal seems too distant or is too future-oriented, activation lowers significantly which is why we may lose interest in sticking to the goals or lose the vision of what might be the best ways to achieve them.

Usually, goals are the incidents that have not yet happened to us, but we want to make them happen. And since they cannot occur on their own, we follow a set of rules or a plan to ensure achievement.

The sense of struggle and power testing that involves the goal-setting process is what makes it so engaging to us. For example, a primary drive or intrinsic motivation that forces us to do well on a new or challenging assignment is the ability to demonstrate and validate our skills.

The underlying neurochemical changes that cause this motivation to keep burning is therefore vital to understand before we embark on setting the goals.

Psychologists and mental health researchers associate goals with a higher predictability of success, the reasons being:

Goal-setting is an area in psychology whose roots lie in scientific data and empirical evidence. It is a flexible theory which is open to modifications according to the changing times, and yet serve the purpose of maximizing success, minimizing failures and disappointments, optimizing personal abilities.

A study on the effects of goal-setting on athletic rehabilitation and training revealed that groups that followed a solid plan of action were more prepared, had higher self-efficacy, and were more organized in their approach.

The experimental population had three groups, only one of which received the goal-setting intervention. Post-experimental measures showed there was a significant difference in the levels of spirit and motivation among the group that received the goal-setting interventions and the other two groups.

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