



Supporting young people to:

MANAGE GOALS

Manage Goals Is a young person's experience with an adult who assists them to set and manage goals that are important to them and that build upon their passions and interests.

Managing goals involves identifying personal and group goals, breaking these goals down into manageable bit-sized steps, reflecting on challenges and successes, and adjusting as necessary.











DOES MANAGING GOALS LOOK LIKE AS A PART OF OUR PROGRAM?

One of the great talents of young people is their capacity to dream and envision their future self. As a program staff, you are presented with a unique opportunity to teach young people strategies that can help them learn more about themselves and turn their dreams into reality.

Supporting young people to manage goals can be encouraged through a more formal process, such as through structured one-on-one weekly conversations with young people, or informally by modeling it during group projects and activities. Group projects and activities are uniquely positioned to teach young people strategies that can help them turn their dreams into reality. Group activities have also been shown to promote healthy youth development and social and emotional learning.



RESEARCH-BASED EXPERIENCES



Provide opportunities for young people to set group goals. Before young people begin a group project, activity, or lesson, invite them to agree upon the goals of their work together, as a group. Ask them to be specific, defining both processes (how they want to work together) and goals (the end result or impact of their work).

Provide opportunities for young people to set individual goals. If the group has created a collective goal, invite young people to identify their specific contribution toward that end. Help them set intentions that will support the group's success. If you are working one-to-one, support each young person to envision their future self or life. Ask them to think about where they want to be in three to five years: What do they want to accomplish? What jobs or careers do they envision for themselves?

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Provide opportunities for young people to pursue various strategies to meet their goals, reflecting on progress along the way and shifting gears when necessary. A well-designed action plan can make it easier for young people to track and realize their goals. Action plans outline all the necessary steps to achieve goals. They help young people reach their targets by breaking down large goals into small, bite-sized "baby steps" and assigning a timeframe to each step.





GOALS IMPORTANT?

Manage Goals has been shown to increase motivation, impact our perceived control over our future, and promote overall positive youth development (Lerner, R.M., et al., 2011; Houston, H. 2020). Some studies find that, when goals match the challenges and demands of a young person's life situation, they contribute to their overall well-being (Nurmi & Salmela-Aro, 2002; Salmela-Aro, Nurmi, Saisto, & Halmesmäki, 2001). Goals are dynamic, and young people reconstruct them over time to meet contextual realities (Brandtstädter & Rothermund, 2002). However, the more the goals are elaborated, the more likely they are to support a young person's success (Aarts, 2007).

Research also demonstrates that managing goals is partly logical but mostly emotional. In his book titled The Happiness Hypothesis, Dr. Haidt describes our emotions as "a 5-ton elephant and our logic as a small rider on its back trying to direct it to take action" (Haidt J., 2006). To manage emotions, we need to set goals that we are passionate about or that we are emotionally invested in.



DISCOVERIES FROM HELLO INSIGHT



Young people are dynamic and full of promise, with many different pathways to success. Every year Hello Insight mines our growing dataset of more than 125,000 young people, participating in more than 1,500 programs nation-wide, so that we can continue to learn what works for each and every young person.

* Supporting young people to manage goals is highly predictive of significant growth in social emotional learning for young people ages 16 to 24. And, it works well when combined with efforts to engage authentically and promote peer bonds. These variables work together to promote even greater SEL growth.





HAVE OTHER PROGRAMS INCORPORATED MANAGING GOALS? **MANAGING GOALS?**

PYD, including managing goals, is not a curriculum, it is a way of working with young people that has been proven to promote SEL. You can incorporate managing goals in a wide variety of interventions and programs. Here is how some Hello Insight members have integrated this practice into their programs.



PROGRAM EXAMPLES



At DREAM (formerly Harlem RBI), the TeamBuilders program engages young people in goal setting, reflection, and management through one-on-one check-ins with individual team members and their families.



Often the goals that young people set for themselves are unexpected and not necessarily what the adult staff might have chosen for them. TeamBuilders staff report that they need to check their own assumptions and biases, allowing young people to choose for themselves. Through these interactions, TeamBuilders staff learn even more about the young people they serve.



At Queens Community House's Access for Young Women Program, young women are invited to create personal mission statements, vision boards, and mantras that they use throughout the year.

Staff and youth reference their vision boards throughout the program year and recite their mandra as a constant reminder of who they are becoming.



A typical day at Play Rugby USA, starts with a "circle up" in which young people give input and provide suggestions to improve the team.

They set aspirational goals and use both positive and critical feedback to help players improve - both on the field and off.





CAN OUR PROGRAM BEST SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE TO MANAGE GOALS?

Use this reflection guide with your staff to explore "bright spots" — practices that you already do, highlight potential "accelerators" — practices that you could easily incorporate into your work, and "challenges" — things that might make this practice difficult.

PRACTICES

Ways to support young people

BRIGHT SPOTS

Examples of what the program already does

ACCELERATORS

Ways you could easily incorporate this practice

CHALLENGES

What might make this practices difficult to do

Support young people to set group goals

Encourage young people to set their own goals

Help them to create plans to achieve their goals and to review and reflect on progress

Create opportunities to celebrate successes



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This guide is part of a set meant to help youth-serving programs incorporate PYD. Visit www.ins.gt/pyd-exp to learn more.

View a full list of citations at www.ins.gt/citations









