

Goal Setting Exercise

Setting Goals for Change Exercise

The following exercise can be used to help a person set one or more behavior change goals. The goal(s) must be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely). Although long-term goals may be stated, short-term immediate goals and specific actions and steps to be taken should be clearly stated. Patients only need to set 1 or 2 goals during the session, as setting numerous goals may be overwhelming. At subsequent sessions, previously stated goals and progress made toward them can be revisited and new goals can be stated as goals are achieved. Setting and achieving smaller, fewer goals can build self-efficacy over time.

One goal might be to either cut down or stop drinking. Another goal may have to do with behaviors related to drinking (e.g., *“I won’t drive after I’ve been drinking.”*) The following exercise can be done verbally or written to assist a patient with deciding on what the goals will be.

WILL I CUT DOWN – OR WILL I STOP MY ALCOHOL USE?

Now that you have decided to make a change to your use of substances, your next decision is whether you will use alcohol/drugs less or stop using substances altogether.

To help you make up your mind, think about these questions:

- ▶ Do you have any health or psychological problems that might be made worse by your substance use? - Your provider can advise you.
- ▶ Do you experience withdrawal symptoms when you stop drinking or using drugs? If so, stopping use entirely is probably the best goal for you. - Your provider can help you manage the withdrawal symptoms.
- ▶ Do you have any problems at school as a result of your substance use?
- ▶ Do you have any legal or financial problems as a result of your substance use?
- ▶ Do you have any relationship or family problems because of your substance use?

Have you solved substance use problems before by stopping completely? – Then, this might be your best way now.