

# Solving Your Problems One Step at a Time

One of the most serious symptoms of depression is the belief that your problems are beyond your control and will never get better. But most problems can be addressed by setting a realistic goal and determining the steps necessary to achieve that goal.

For example, Diane was depressed because she felt overwhelmed by the stress in her life and she had very few things that made her happy. Diane lived with her elderly mother who had several serious illnesses. Diane felt that she had no time for herself and no social life. Diane didn't like her job as a warehouse manager, but it paid well, and she needed the money, and she didn't feel that she had the time or energy to find a more fulfilling job.

Diane began the process of improving her life by listing her two main goals.

- To engage in more social activities and meet new people.
- To find a more interesting job that paid as least as much as her old job.

Diane felt that the first goal was easier to achieve and would help her feel better about her life more quickly.

She began by writing a goal that was achievable and measurable. It is important to have a goal that is measurable so you can know what to work towards and to be clear when your goal has been accomplished. Diane's goal was: "To go out and meet new people at least once a week."

Diane broke her goal into small steps or sub-goals. They were:

1. To make a list of activity groups in her area by doing research on the Internet.
2. To decide on three activity groups that she would enjoy.
3. To find several people who would stay with her mother when she was out.
4. To go out to an activity once a week (even if she wasn't in the mood).

Within a month, Diane had found a knitting group that met every Friday night at a local Starbucks. Through the group, she made some a few friends and began to feel less isolated in her life.

Of course, not every journey to solving a problem is so straightforward. Sometimes you have to change the steps you must take to achieve a goal. Sometimes there are unforeseen obstacles, and many times motivation is a problem. Let's face it, change is hard. But setting a goal and writing down the steps to achieve your goals is an important part of the process of creating a happier and more fulfilling life.

Use the worksheet on the next page to set a goal and the steps you need to take to achieve that goal. This worksheet will also help you understand the factors that can help you achieve your goal.

Write down a goal that will address a problem that is bothering you.

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How will your life be different when you meet that goal?

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Who can support you in achieving the goal?

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Do you anticipate any obstacles to achieving your goal? Is there any way to address these obstacles?

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Write down the steps you need to take to achieve your goal and the dates you think you can achieve each step. When you break down your goals into small incremental steps they are easier to achieve.

Step 1

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Date to Achieve Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2

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Date to Achieve Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Step 3

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Date to Achieve Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Step 4

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Date to Achieve Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Step 5

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Date to Achieve Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Step 6

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Date to Achieve Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Step 7

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Date to Achieve Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Step 8

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Date to Achieve Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Step 9

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Date to Achieve Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Step 10

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Date to Achieve Goal \_\_\_\_\_