

Commit to pursuing your goals

Values are like a compass, they allow us to set the direction of our life. Goals are the steps we take in that direction. Goals are only useful if we act on them. Life does not stop happening because we want some 'time-out', so any time is equally good to act on our goals. Committing to our goals does not usually involve taking huge steps towards them but adjusting our behaviour and actions on a daily basis, and that is precisely what makes it hard to 'stick to it'.

In this activityⁱ we will ask you to keep track of your goals and of the reasons that often lead you to feel demoralised and break commitments. Indeed, no one goes thorough life without feeling like giving up one time or another. Such feelings are important because they force us to re-evaluate our goals and our ability to achieve them. Sometimes things get too hard and we have to recognise that a particular goal is out of our control. In other situations we may conclude the goal is still in our reach, we just need to keep pushing on, even during the harder moments. In other moments we may just conclude that we chose the wrong goal to pursue and find others more enjoyable or aligned with our values.

Let's practice

Please go back to the list of value statements and short- and long-term goals you set for each of these during the activity 'Make your plan'.

Use the charts below to keep a record over the next few weeks of your ratings of how consistent your actions have been with each of your three most important value statements. In other words, how committed you have been in trying to achieve the goals you set for those statements. When your commitment score is low, list down the reasons why you think this is. Use these to reflect about what you can do or change to continue pursuing your goal.

We know, it is easier said than done. Here are a few suggestions on how you can reflect about what is keeping you from pursuing your goals:

1. Share

Talk about your goals with others who you trust. Explain them why they are important to you, why you chose to pursue them. This will make your commitment(s) real. Tell them about what concerns you in this process, for instance, what you think you might not be able to do and why, how this may affect them, etc... Discuss what can be these people's role in supporting you. Just don't expect them to make your goals come true, and don't try to relinquish your responsibility in achieving these by sharing.

2. Think 'patterns'

Patterns are things that repeat themselves. These can be thoughts, emotions, behaviours, etc... Usually our biggest limitations or weaknesses express themselves across different contexts and therefore will form some kind of pattern. Looking at the similarities in the way we think about things, interact with other people, make decisions, react to events, etc... will helps you identify these patterns. Is it the case that you are giving yourself the same reason for not pursuing multiple goals? What are the events that tend to get in the way of you pursuing your goals? Looking for what is common in your experience may give you new insights about what you need to change in the way you have been handling things.

3. Take it easy

Sometimes things get harder. If they do, allow yourself to prioritise. As long as you keep moving in your valued direction, it is OK to completely give up on a goal or to put it on hold so that you can focus on other (easier, more important) goals. Just like with running, more important than the size or the speed of each step you take, is the fact that you keep taking a step after another.

Goal progression assessment sheet

Starting today, in each week mark your ratings by putting in the appropriate box a forwards stroke (/). When your commitment score is lower than 5 list the things that are keeping you from pursuing your goal. After reflecting on these, note down what change you will make to try to remain committed. You can always come back to this exercise whenever you feel you are less committed to a goal and reflect on why this could be happening or what changes you could make.

Goal: _____																	
Commitment score	10																
	9																
	8																
	7																
	6																
	5																
	4																
	3																
	2																
	1																
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
		Week															

1. Reasons for low commitment:

Changes

2. Reasons for low commitment:

Changes

3. Reasons for low commitment:

Changes

¹ Adapted from Hayes, S. C., & Smith, S. (2005). *Get out of your mind and into your life - The new Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.