



Goals!

How to Get Everything You Want – Faster Than You Ever Thought Possible

By Brian Tracy

13-minute read

Synopsis

Goals! (2003) explores the power of goal-setting. It outlines tips and techniques for achieving your most important aims in life and examines the link between goal-setting and success.

Who is it for?

- Anyone wanting to achieve more in life
- Entrepreneurs looking for inspiration
- Procrastinators hoping to get more done

About the author

Brian Tracy is a motivational speaker and self-help author. He's the author of over 80 books and is the CEO of Brian Tracy International, a leadership-development training firm.

What's in it for me? Learn to change your life by setting goals.

Many of us dream of achieving massive success, but only some people actually achieve it, while others spend their lives just dreaming. Why? The answer lies in the incredible power of goal-setting.

In these blinks, you'll learn how setting the right goals and dedicating yourself to achieving them can change the whole trajectory of your life. Your goals can be small tasks or all-consuming dreams. In either case, you'll discover why being goal-oriented enables you to succeed in anything you choose to do.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- why negativity is the enemy of success;
- how writing down your desires can change your life; and
- the power of single handling.

Use the power of your mind to transform your life.

Imagine you had a superpower that enabled you to succeed in anything you did. What would you choose to do? If you think this sounds like a fantasy, think again. We all have the power to succeed, in any area. All it takes is the right *mindset*.

Your thoughts are more than just hopes or wishes; they're also *creative*. They shape your world in a surprisingly concrete way. With time, your reality starts to look like whatever you spend your time thinking about. So, if you spend your time thinking about being successful in your chosen field, then eventually you will be.

The key message here is: Use the power of your mind to transform your life.

When successful people are asked what topics consume their thoughts, one response is the most common. They spend their time thinking about two things: what they want and how they can achieve it. In essence, they dedicate their inner headspace to thinking about their *goals*. And so should you.

In contrast, unsuccessful people spend a whole lot of time thinking about what they *don't* want. They think about their worries, problems, and who or what is to blame for their failures.

But it's not enough to just think about your goals; you need to write them down, too.

The power of writing down your goals was discovered by a Harvard University study in 1979. Researchers asked recent Harvard MBA graduates a simple question: Had they set any specific goals they wanted to achieve in the future? The researchers discovered that only 13 percent

of the graduates had set clear goals. Just 3 percent had written their goals down. The rest of the graduates had no goals at all. Ten years later, in 1989, the researchers followed up with the graduates. They made an astonishing discovery. The graduates who'd set themselves goals were making, on average, twice as much money as those who hadn't. As for the graduates who'd written those goals down – on average, they were earning ten times as much!

Why does this simple act of setting goals and writing them down make such a difference? Well, goals provide you with direction and meaning. These are things that many people lack in their lives. And with every goal you achieve, you feel more confident and capable of tackling even bigger goals in the future.

Ditch the negativity and change your world.

When the author was a young man, he lived in a small cold apartment with no money to his name. One evening he had a revelation: no one was coming to save him. If he wanted to escape his situation, it'd be up to him alone.

What the author realized that night was that he had to start *taking responsibility* for his own life.

Accepting responsibility like this is harder than it sounds. It's so hard that a lot of people never manage it. Consider all the adults who still blame others for all their problems. They get fixated on how other people, like their parents, have done them wrong.

The key message here is: Ditch the negativity and change your world.

People who can't take responsibility often suffer from a surplus of *negativity*.

Because of this negative emotion, they struggle to ever achieve success. Why? Because when you feel angry, jealous, or self-pitying, you're too exhausted to do the work necessary to succeed.

Consider someone who gets fired. A goal-oriented individual shrugs her shoulders and looks for a new position. But a negative person wastes his time feeling hateful and bitter. This uses up energy that could be used finding a job.

Luckily, there are some things you can do to shed your emotional baggage.

The first step is to stop *justifying* your negativity. Have you ever noticed that negative people are always eager to explain to you all the reasons *why* they feel so angry or disappointed? When you start justifying your bad attitude, it's because you feel entitled to feel this way. So you keep firing off excuses as to why you can't behave any differently. But bad things happen to everyone – it's no excuse for negativity.

Another key driver of negative emotion is *hypersensitivity*. This happens when you're overly sensitive to what other people think of you and how they treat you. Instead of feeling an unshakeable sense of your own value, you believe that other people determine your worth. So you feel unduly angry or inferior whenever someone expresses any disapproval.

The solution to hypersensitivity is to remind yourself that other people don't think all that much about you. Think of how preoccupied you are with your own life. Others are just as caught up with theirs. They're usually not wasting their time judging you.

Create goals that are specific, challenging, and come with a deadline.

Why do so many people wander through their lives aimlessly, never setting any goals for themselves? The truth is that a lot of people don't know *how* to set effective goals. Luckily, it's not all that difficult. You just need to consider six key principles.

The first principle is that your goals must be *specific* and detail-focused. A vague goal isn't a goal at all – it's a wish. So don't bother writing down that you'd like to be "happy." Instead, it should be something concrete that you can easily visualize.

The key message here is: Create goals that are specific, challenging, and come with a deadline.

The next principle is that your goal needs to be *measurable*. Don't make it your goal to "earn a high income." Instead, write down a specific amount of money that you aim to earn over a specific time period.

Another element of successful goal-setting is to ensure your goal is *time-bounded*. You need deadlines and schedules for when you're going to do what. Make sure these deadlines are *realistic*, too. And remember, it's often said that there are no unrealistic goals – just unrealistic time frames for achieving them.

Your goal should also be *challenging*. The best goals require you to stretch yourself outside of your comfort zone, just a little. The right level of challenge is when you have about a 50 percent chance of success. Reaching for this sort of goal might cause you a bit of stress. But that's not a bad thing; a little stress and striving will bring out the best in you.

Next, make sure each goal is in *harmony* with other goals you're trying to achieve. This is important because when two goals contradict each other, you likely won't be successful in either one. For instance, the author once knew someone who had two goals: he wanted to be highly successful in business, but he also wanted to play golf every day. As you can imagine, one of those might have been achievable, but not both at the same time.

The final principle of goal-setting is that you must have *one overarching goal* that supersedes all others.

This big goal is the defining purpose of your whole life. Achieving it would make your life better than accomplishing any other goal would. This goal should be your number one priority.

Do some soul searching to help you achieve your goals.

When you start out on your goal-setting journey, there are certain questions you'll need to ask yourself. The answers that you provide will spur you on your way.

The first question to ask is: Do I really want this goal to become a reality? This question is crucial because you must choose a goal that you have a strong desire to achieve. This desire needs to be personal to you. You'll never be able to chase a goal that someone else has set for you with the same sense of urgency.

The key message here is: Do some soul searching to help you achieve your goals.

Next, you must believe, deep down in your soul, that you deserve to get your goal, and that you'll eventually achieve it – even if it doesn't happen right away. The most successful people in the world have an unshakable faith in their own ability to get what they want. To foster this unshakable faith, it's important to set reasonably realistic goals. For instance, don't set yourself the goal of going from poverty to vast wealth in a single year. Not only is this probably unachievable, but when you don't manage it, you'll lose confidence in yourself.

When mapping out your goals, it's also important to pinpoint your starting point.

Ask yourself where you are now on the journey to success. Let's say you want to lose weight. Then you can determine your starting point by simply stepping on a scale. If your goal is to see your net worth climb by a certain amount, then your first step would be to work out what your financial worth is today. Taking this snapshot of your starting point encourages you to be honest with yourself about how much work you have ahead. This will make it easier to set achievable goals.

Once you have your goal in mind, ask yourself how reaching it will improve your life. Write down as many answers as you can. The more reasons you can think of for wanting to achieve it, the more you'll want it, and the more likely it is you'll get it. For instance, when the author works with people whose goal is financial success, he encourages them to write down hundreds of reasons why having more money would improve their lives and the lives of people they love.

If you don't want to settle for what's easy, then don't be afraid to fail – a lot.

How many times have you failed in your life? You might think that repeated failure is a sign you're doing

something wrong, but that's not always the case. Actually, successful people fail far more often than unsuccessful people. Why? It all comes down to their attitude toward obstacles.

When a success-oriented person encounters an obstacle, she gives it her best shot. And because some challenges are hard to overcome, she often fails. But she gets up, dusts herself off, and tries again.

In contrast, an unsuccessful person rarely fails at anything. Say he's started out toward a goal and he sees a roadblock in his way. He doesn't even try to overcome it. Instead, he gives up and retreats. He settles for the easy road and quickly returns to his comfort zone.

The key message here is: If you don't want to settle for what's easy, then don't be afraid to fail – a lot.

Look upon your failure as temporary; it's the price you must pay on your journey to success.

If you're failing to reach a goal, ask yourself some questions. Why haven't you achieved this goal already? Identify all the obstacles that have held you back so far. Importantly, don't focus too much on the problem aspect of your obstacles – remember, there'll always be difficulties along the way. Instead, concentrate your thoughts on coming up with *solutions*. In fact, a lot of people define personal leadership as the ability to solve problems. So, rather than wishing the way was easier, focus on taking action and improving your problem-solving.

Problem-solving is a skill like any other, whether it's riding a bike or using a computer keyboard. The more you do it, the faster and better you'll be. If you start off by solving small problems, then you'll attract bigger and more important problems into your life. And guess what? You'll solve those problems, too. Keep going with a positive attitude and, eventually, you'll be solving problems that have big consequences attached to them. They won't just be your own problems, but other people's, too. In other words, you'll become a leader.

Your ability to overcome your obstacles begins and ends with a positive attitude. So as you address your challenges, remember that you have all the necessary tools. You have the intelligence and the tenacity to overcome obstacles and reach your goal.

When you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail.

The most successful people don't rely on blind luck to make their dreams a reality. Instead, they create thorough, detailed plans – a roadmap toward their goals. If you're thinking that you don't have time to make a plan, then think again.

Evidence suggests that the most successful business leaders never jump in without sitting down and writing a business plan first.

A study by *Inc.* magazine looked at the fortunes of 50 new start-up businesses. Some of these companies spent months developing business plans before they began operation. Others dove in without any plan at all. When the researchers checked up on the start-ups two years later, they found a clear pattern: the companies with business plans were much more profitable than those without.

The key message here is: When you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail.

Interestingly, when the researchers asked the company leaders whether they actually *followed* their business plan, most of them said no. So it may not be important to stick to your business plan. What matters is that you carefully consider every aspect of your project before you start.

Why is this careful consideration so important?

Well, planning encourages you to organize your ideas and thoughts. It also forces you to ask *what-if* questions. You'll consider what circumstances could prove fatal to your goals if they were to happen, so you'll be able to actually prepare for these disaster scenarios. On a positive note, you'll also be able to identify potential opportunities and personal strengths that you can unlock on your path to your goals. All too often, people are unaware of these until they start writing out a plan.

Your plan can help you reach your goal faster and more effectively. But, sometimes, it'll do just the opposite: it'll make you realize that your goal is undesirable, or even unattainable. This might sound like a bad outcome, but it's better to realize that a goal isn't worth it *before* you waste a lot of money and time pursuing it. It's always easier to get involved in something than it is to get yourself out of something. So do your planning before you dedicate yourself to a goal, not afterward.

Manage your time and take control of your life.

How you spend your hours is how you spend your life. That's why good time-management skills are crucial if you're going to achieve your goals. Of course, none of us can control time. When we talk about time management, we're really talking about learning to manage ourselves.

When your to-do list is pulling you in different directions, always choose to focus on the most high-value task you can do. A high-value task is one that brings you closer to achieving your goals.

The key message here is: Manage your time and take control of your life.

The ability to discriminate between high- and low-value tasks is a major difference between successful people and unsuccessful people. Successful people spend their time doing high-value tasks that'll take them further.

Meanwhile, unsuccessful people are content to simply *kill* time working on low-value tasks that are of little consequence to their development.

Let's say you've identified your high-value task to work on. One of the most effective techniques for completing it is *single handling*. In practice, this means that once you've decided to undertake a task, you give that task 100 percent of your attention until it's 100 percent completed. That might sound easy, but many people find it surprisingly difficult. They look for any excuse to take a break or allow their attention to be diverted.

Single handling is the secret ace up the sleeve of many of history's most brilliant people. Thomas Edison, the famous inventor, once wrote that more than anything else, his success came from his ability to work on one thing and one thing only, without stopping. If you struggle to master single handling, then repeat the following words to yourself every time you start to get distracted: *back to work, back to work, back to work*.

As you work toward good time management, try to carve out chunks of uninterrupted time in your day. These chunks should be half an hour, one hour, or 90 minutes long. Having these uninterrupted time chunks is incredibly important if you want to achieve any big, important goal. One of the best opportunities for working nonstop like this is early in the morning. So why not set your alarm for an hour earlier than usual? That way, you can start your day, and the rest of your life, by working on your most meaningful goal.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks:

The key to success lies in deciding on what you truly want, writing your desires down, and coming up with a detailed plan to help you fulfill them. If you want to achieve your goals, you'll also need a positive mindset, great time-management skills, and a willingness to keep failing until you get it right.

Actionable advice:

Be a go-giver, as well as a go-getter.

It's often said that no one makes it alone. To reach your goals, you need assistance from all sorts of people in your life, from your friends and family to your professional associates. Interestingly, the best way to encourage someone to help you is often to reach out and offer help to *them* first. So think about how you can lend other people a hand. You'll soon find yourself surrounded by people who are clamoring to help you, too.

Got feedback?

We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email

to remember@blinkist.com with *Goals!* as the subject line and share your thoughts!