

Building a Balanced Lifestyle: Strategic Goal Statements



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So, you have some dreams you'd like to pursue...

I get it. We all have dreams. Big ones and little ones and the ones we never mention because we're afraid we might actually have to start working on achieving them.

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life." Proverbs 13:12

Today is the day to take a step forward, to commit to identifying the dreams you have, why you have them and create an action plan to move forward in the pursuit of the changes you want to make in your life. Are you ready?

Let's start with you...

Our First Step: Self-Assessment

Don't groan. Self-Assessment is a valuable source of information; without it we will remain stuck in old patterns of behavior. Seriously. Think of it like this. Let's say when you get into your car in the morning it sputters, coughs, tries to start, but then simply shuts off. You try again, and the same thing. What do you do? You don't just leave it in the driveway and try every day to start it again do you? No, you examine it to see if you can determine why it won't start, then take it to a mechanic to have them fix it. **If you are stuck in patterns of behavior that are not producing the results you want, you need to examine why.** That's what self-assessment in terms of developing strategic goal statements focuses on.

Here's the process I use to determine why I am not going where I want to:

1. **Pray.** Working in our own understanding of the ways things "should be" or how we want them to be is what causes us to get stuck. Relying on our own knowledge to get us out is what keeps us running around in circles trying to get unstuck, wasting time and increasing our frustration. In our broken-down car scenario, this is where you would go to a mechanic to have them diagnose the issues instead of trying to determine what is wrong on your own. Sit with God and ask Him to reveal how He sees you and the place you are in. He is not a judgmental, condescending God (*See John 3:17*) and will not condemn you. He wants to see you walking in freedom and fulfilling the plans He has for your life (*See Jeremiah 29:11*). Is that what you want too?
2. **Reflect.** When we reflect on what has been happening, looking for where we got tripped up, where we tended to get off track, even where we fell back into our old coping patterns, we learn the why. It's the same as with our broken-down car. When we reflect on what happened the last time we drove it we can better understand (maybe) why it won't work today. Were you aware of some weird sounds, check-engine lights, or irregularities the last time you drove it? In our own lives, we have signals indicating we are close to getting off track, falling into old habits again, or getting stuck. What has your recent past been telling you?
3. **Observe.** This skill is, I believe, the most underutilized because it requires is to pay attention in the present. What is currently happening in your life? Do you know? I have been sharing all year the tool I use to record a week in my life so I get a clear picture of exactly what I am doing with my time. In the broken-down car scenario, this is the diagnostic test the mechanic would run your car through to determine which processes aren't operating efficiently for the car. When we pay attention to our daily life enough to keep track of what we are doing we gain insight into the why; to get a diagnosis if you will

Our Second Step: Vision

Casting a vision is no simple task because it requires us to open up to dream. We don't dream too much anymore, though do we? Dreaming has somehow become overrun with fear; fear of getting our hopes up too high, fear of having our hopes dashed, fear of hoping for a change that never comes.

Fear is not our friend, and is certainly no friend to change and growth.

Why are we so afraid though? *I* have become afraid to dream because *I* am afraid of being let down by myself and others. I am even afraid of being let down by God; what happens if He doesn't provide a way to what I hope for? What are you afraid of in your dreaming?

And yet, vision is vastly important to moving forward with purpose, to living our lives with intentionality to (hopefully) make the most of our time here on earth.

So, **how do we combat the fear of hoping too much to commit to a vision for what we hope for in the future?**

It starts with recognizing how we perceive our lives and those around us. The lens through which we seek to cast our vision will determine if we are self-reliant or God-reliant, and that makes all the difference.

Think of it like going to an optometrist. When you sit in the chair, the doctor switches lenses back and forth that either make things more or less blurry. The doctor is trying to help us see as clearly as possible. It can be frustrating until, *viola!* The perfect combination for *our set of eyeballs* is found and we have clear vision. The same is true in casting a vision for ourselves. On our own, we will stumble around in fuzzy sight, searching within our own limited self-sufficiency to create clarity. But, when we let The Doctor (God) rearrange how we see, our lives come into focus and we can perceive the end result of the change we are hoping to make.

So, how do we cast vision with the lens that will give us the clarity we need to move forward with the changes we want to make?

Action Plan

1. **Reflect.** Look at your Schedule Tracker™ self-assessment. What in your life needs to change? This is like looking around at different things in order to determine how clear your vision is before you determine that, yes, you do need to see a doctor to have your eyes examined. Start by making a list of what you see that may need to change. Mine included things like: “I don't like the way I feel in my body”, “I am dissatisfied with the level of commitment I have to selling my books”, and “I am restless staying at home to work all the time.”
 - a. **Start your list Here** (*continue on a separate sheet of paper if needed*):

2. **Ask.** Ask God to show you how He sees each of the areas you identified. Take each situation to Him one by one (this can take several days) and examine it in light of His Word. Ask others to share with you their insights. (I asked trusted friends who were mature in their faith.) This process is frustrating as there are many layers to sift through, just as when you sit in that Optometrist’s chair as they flip through many types of lenses trying to make your vision clear. Record any insights you receive
 - a. **Who can you ask for honest insights into your life?**
 - b. Have you prayed? (Once you are finished with this packet, share your SGS’s with at least one other person AND offer them up to God’s direction in prayer)

3. **Dream.** Whenever the Optometrist gets just the right lenses in place our vision opens up to pure clarity. In that moment, we know we can see and we step out of the office in confidence (unless, of course, you have had your eyes dilated...but I digress). We are unafraid to step out, even if we aren’t quite sure what we will encounter. The same is true with change. Once we have a clear understanding of the situation, we can dream with confidence knowing that what we come up with is only part of the equation: having a vision gives us the *ability* to take a step forward. In that forward motion, *God directs* our steps. *Our vision is a catalyst for change, not the absolute version of the final result.*

SERENITY PRAYER

*God grant me the serenity
 To accept the things I cannot change;
 Courage to change the things I can;
 And wisdom to know the difference.
 Living one day at a time;
 Enjoying one moment at a time;
 Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
 Taking, as He did, this sinful world
 As it is, not as I would have it;
 Trusting that He will make all things right
 If I surrender to His Will;
 So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
 And supremely happy with Him
 Forever and ever in the next.
 Amen.*

- a. What are the dreams and longings on your heart? List them here:

Our Third Step: Finding Our Why

Over the years, I have set many goals for myself. From the typical New Year's resolutions to long-term goals, goal setting is something I am familiar with.

I am also all too familiar with the concept of failing at said goals...

Maybe you are too?

This past year I enrolled in a course that Michael Hyatt offered called "5 Days to your Best Year Ever." In this course, I learned something that has changed how I approach any change I want to make in my life: the concept of the Why.

The Why is the reason we want to do the hard work of change. It's the thing we cling to when we get stuck in the "messy middle;" that place where things are no longer what they used to be, but aren't quite yet what we hope them to become.

The why is what gets us past the struggle and into the triumph.

Think of it in terms of a home renovation project. We see that the kitchen, for instance, doesn't fit with how our family needs to live within the house (self-assessment). We dream and work with a designer to create a plan to bring that dream into a reality (vision). In the middle, though, is a ton of mess and frustration due to increased costs, extended deadlines, lost productivity and who knows what else. It gets messier as we live without a kitchen, increasing our eating out and on-the-go meals. Anyone who has ever gone through a kitchen renovation knows it is one of the toughest remodeling project to take on. In the middle of it we don't just call it quits, though do we? No, we push on to get to the goal of that new kitchen.

WHY?

Because we must get back to some sort of working kitchen; we need a stove and refrigerator and counters to effectively feed our family. That's what keeps us going through the mess and frustration. When we start out the renovation we focus on the end result of the dream kitchen but that's not enough. When things get really tough we *can* choose any quick fix just so that the mess will end, but we don't. We focus on the dream.

WHY?

Because the dream is based on what it can accomplish for us when it is achieved. In this case of the renovation, it could be a better work-flow in the kitchen, more space for everyone to gather or to create a safe space. That's the why that keeps us going.

In our lives, the why is just as important to taking us through the mess within us as we make changes.

Action Plan

1. **Break it Down.** One of the goals I have shared is that I want to feel confident in a swim suit by the time summer hits. My *vision* is based on feeling confident. My *self-assessment* revealed *the pattern of behavior* I had been living with was based on a lie that told me I was only acceptable if my body looked a certain way in a swim suit. This behavior had produced condemnation within that caused me to strive for my ideal image in all sorts of unhealthy ways.

a. What does your self-assessment say about your vision of change?

2. **Identify the Root Need.** This has been something I have struggled with for years and, honestly, I am tired of the struggle. I am done with feeling like I don't measure up and feeling like I can't enjoy myself and our friends around the beach or the pool. I am also nearing the half-century point and I do not want to carry this behavior into the second half of my life. *I need to feel safe in who I am.*

a. What is your root need?

3. **Articulate the Reason:** Once I got to this point in my goal setting I stopped and asked myself a series of questions: Why do I want to be free of this struggle? Why do I want to be confident in a swim suit versus some other goal? Why do I want to change what I have been doing? Once I framed my struggle in this way the answer became clear: *Because living in the fear of condemnation is not living in the freedom of Jesus and if I am not living in His freedom but profess to be a follower of Jesus Christ I am engaging in hypocritical behavior.* That is my why. It's the thing I hold on to when making choices about how I treat my body. The thought I shout back to the condemning voices when they try to rear their ugly heads again. It's what is keeping me going through the messy middle when I am no longer what I used to be but not yet where I want to be.

a. What about you? Why do you have the goals you do?

Our Fourth Step: Create an Action Plan for Success

Goal setting is an intentional decision to make changes in our lives. From small things like drinking more water every day to larger things like stopping smoking or adding regular exercise into our daily lives, **having an action plan to achieve our goals is essential to our success.**

An action plan is our road map; the path we will walk out that takes us from where we are today to where we want to be. If I were constructing a building I would need to begin with assessing the scope of the project (self-assessment), creating a design (vision) determining why the building needed to be constructed (the why) and then designing a blueprint outlining the steps needed to bring the building to life (the action plan).

The same is true with our goals. When we move beyond self-assessment, vision and why to design a personal plan of action, we create specific steps for growth towards our end result. Those action steps build the framework that sustains our growth, giving us an opportunity to achieve success in any area of our lives. But, like any construction project, there is a strategy to follow that will make all the difference in our level of success.

Action Plan

The Foundation: In Strategic Goal Statements the foundation is the place we begin. It's our starting point. It's the mixture of our self-assessment, vision and why, molded into a base that our action steps will build upon. In the case of the goal I have been sharing in this packet, my strategic statement foundation looks like this:

I will be confident in a swimsuit by the time we open our pool this summer so that I fully enjoy the summertime activities we have at our own pool and our friend's pool parties.

This statement incorporates that I am not currently happy with my level of confidence (self-assessment) how I want to be confident (in a swim suit, the vision) and the why (to more fully enjoy the summertime activities we have at pool parties). It is from this foundation that I can begin to design specific steps that will take me from where I currently am to where I want to be.

The Framework: In Strategic Goal Statements the framework is built with the steps we will take to turn our vision into a reality. In construction projects, these are the plans complete with measurements, specific materials, timelines, needed resources and costs. In our lives, these steps need to be **SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Related.** These are the action steps for the goal I listed above:

1. Drink half my body weight (in ounces) in water daily
 1. **S:** *half my body weight.*
 2. **M:** *in water ounces.*
 3. **A:** *I can drink that much water.*
 4. **R:** *there is plenty of time in a day to drink this amount.*
 5. **T:** *daily.*
2. Workout a minimum of 4 days a week, for a minimum of 30 minutes
 1. **S:** *4 days a week.*
 2. **M:** *30 minutes minimum.*
 3. **A:** *there is time in my schedule to incorporate this if I remain flexible.*
 4. **R:** *4 times a week is not unreasonable for my current health.*

5. *T: weekly.*
3. Speak truth to myself when looking in the mirror and tune out the negative voices
 1. *S: speak truth.*
 2. *M: Whenever I look in a mirror.*
 3. *A: I have the power to do this.*
 4. *R: It is realistic for me to re-train my thinking this way.*
 5. *T: It is every time I look in a mirror.*
4. Feed my body the fuel it needs to perform well 80% of the week
 1. *S: eat healthy for my body.*
 2. *M: 80% of the week.*
 3. *A: I have the resources to do this.*
 4. *R: I know what fuel my body needs.*
 5. *T: daily and weekly*
5. Get at least 7 hours of sleep a night, 6 nights a week (Because lack of sleep triggers negativity for me)
 1. *S: 7 hours of sleep.*
 2. *M: 7 hours.*
 3. *A: I will need to rearrange a few things but it can be done.*
 4. *R: It is reasonable given what happens when I do not get enough sleep.*
 5. *T: 6 nights a week*
6. Choose a swim suit based on my body, instead of making my body fit into a particular style of swim suit, by the time our pool opens.
 1. *S: a particular swimsuit style.*
 2. *M: finding a suit that fits my body.*
 3. *A: I have the time to search out a suit and have set a budget.*
 4. *R: There is reasonable expectation there is a suit out there for my body type.*
 5. *T: Before my pool opens.*
7. Focus daily on the truth that I am beautiful; not that a swimsuit, or looking a certain way in one, makes me beautiful whenever I feel my confidence slipping.
 1. *S: focus on the truth that I am beautiful.*
 2. *M: keeping my confidence at an appropriate (not fear-based striving level) level.*
 3. *A: I have the Truth.*
 4. *R: it is reasonable to believe I am beautiful because God made me in His image.*
 5. *T: Whenever I feel my confidence slipping*

NOTE: 7 is the maximum number of actions steps any one Strategic Goal Statement should have. The minimum is three.

Now You Try! Take one vision and re-write it according to the example I shared in Foundation and then break it down using S.M.A.R.T

Strategic Goal Statement:

Action steps to carry it out:

1.

S:

M:

A:

R:

T:

2.

S:

M:

A:

R:

T:

3.

S:

M:

A:

R:

T:

The Inspector: the action steps in our framework are essential to our success, much like constructing walls and floors and the roof are to the successful completion of a building. Every step of the way in a construction project however is inspected by others whose job it to make sure things are moving along according to safety and code. We need Inspectors in our lives as well. **Professionals and/or wise, trustworthy friends who will help us remain accountable while offering insight and wisdom into how to go about achieving success can serve as our Inspectors.** In the case of my goal, I have solicited the help of a personal trainer, a nutrition counselor, my doctor and several friends as well as my family to make sure I remain healthy in my pursuit of confidence.

1. Who will you enlist to be your Inspectors? Write them here:

No matter what goals you have set for yourself this year, take some time to revisit them and work through the steps of Self-Assessment, Vision, Finding the Why and Creating an Action Plan to turn them into Strategic Goal Statements. The resulting success will be well worth it!



Schedule Tracker™



Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Father God, Direct my steps toward Your perfect peace. I offer You my entire day: my to-do lists, tasks, errands, events and activities. By doing so, I also give to You my anxieties, fears and concerns. I ask Your permission to move forward with what I have planned for my day. I will trust in You.

5:00 AM

6:00 AM

7:00 AM

8:00 AM

9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

NOON

1:00 PM

2:00 PM

3:00 PM

4:00 PM

5:00 PM

6:00 PM

7:00 PM

8:00 PM

9:00 PM

10:00 PM

Noon

Sunday

Noon