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Enhance Your Performance Through Goal Setting

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* Enhance Your Performance Through Goal Setting

Goal setting is one of the most valuable performance-enhancing skill sets available to martial artists because it helps you create a path to self-improvement. Having goals helps you get the most from your training because it gives you focus. Researchers have looked at how and why goal-setters achieve more and perform better than non-goal-setters, and they've concluded that one of the main mechanisms is learning where to focus your attention.

Furthermore, goal setting gives purpose to your training. Many times when you work out, you mindlessly go through a *kata* or series of drills. You don't actively think about why you're doing a certain drill or how performing it well will bring you closer to your goals. To counteract that, you should aim to have a purpose-driven mind-set oriented toward continuous improvement. Aspire to improve in small

The author recommends setting goals that are specific and positive—such as “I will focus on using proper technique when executing the roundhouse kick.” (For illustrative purposes, taekwondo expert Gary Wasniewski is shown.)

“Unlike wishes and dreams, goals work only if you have a plan to reach them and commit yourself to the task.”



PHOTO BY RICK HUSTEAD

ways every day and use your goals as your motivation.

This is sometimes referred to as the Kaizen Principle. It takes its name from the Japanese term for improvement, but it connotes progress that occurs gradually, often as a result of incremental changes. Think about a particular goal or focus for a given training session, then reflect on what you learned and how you might use it in future sessions.

Unlike wishes and dreams, goals work only if you have a plan to reach them and

commit yourself to the task. Write down your goals—don't just park them in your head—and review them every day. These five tips will help:

Be specific. Specific goals are better than vague or general ones. Vague: "I will have a good training session." Specific: "I will do circuit training for 30 minutes with my heart rate at 150 beats per minute." Put it on paper so that anyone monitoring you can clearly determine whether you did it.

Be positive. Your goal should state what you will do, not what you won't do.

Telling yourself what not to do almost never works because of the way the human brain is wired. Instead of vowing, "I won't raise my heel when kicking," say "I will focus on using proper technique when executing the roundhouse kick."

Make it challenging but attainable. Accomplishing a goal feels great, boosts your motivation and increases your confidence, so you'll want to set yourself up to succeed. However, your goal must be challenging enough to make you feel like you really worked for it. Studies have shown that people who set challenging goals accomplish more than those who set easy goals or none at all.

Emphasize performance over outcome. Goals work best when they focus on your performance, which you control, rather than on the outcome of an act, which you don't fully control. Example: "I will focus on stand-up attacks and execute good defense in response to my opponent's takedown attempts."

Track, measure and get feedback. Have a way to measure yourself and a time frame you'll use to assess the results. Feedback is a key factor in modifying and improving performance.

To translate your list of goals into a plan of action, follow this progression:

- **Prioritize your goals.** If you're a competitor, you may want to collaborate with your coach to figure out what you'll tackle first.
- **Commit to your goal.** Determine how to make it happen and decide to do it. Share your commitment with someone who will hold you accountable.
- **Read your goals every day.** Have a plan to do something daily to achieve your aims.
- **Keep a record of your progress.** At the end of the day, write down what you learned and accomplished and how you might apply that in the future. Don't forget to acknowledge your success and reward yourself accordingly. ✕



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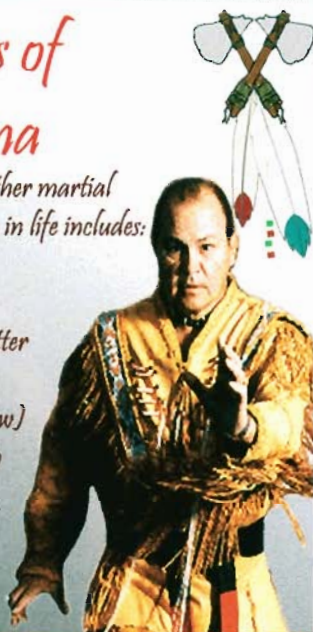
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