

Dr. Kay, my child is in gifted classes. He's smart, probably smarter than me. Most things come easy to him, but when he sets a goal, he thinks it will just happen, like magic. He gives up too soon and is discouraged easily.

- **Brandon W.**

When I was a teenager, I was fat. I had more rolls than a bakery. My dad encouraged activity by lifting weights with me. My football coach just wanted me bigger. I had no self-motivation to lose weight.

You have to want it

The individual has to set goals, based on what *they* want out of life. Setting goals to please other people doesn't work. I wasn't good enough to play football in college, so getting bigger didn't fit my long-term goals. Plus, I was unhappy with my weight. So, I set a goal: don't be so fat. I tried bicycling, but hit a "roadblock".

Roadblocks don't mean failure

I lost some weight, but didn't know how to eat right. I grew up eating heavy carbs and high-calorie junk food. I kept eating that way while bicycling and when I didn't lose enough weight, I got frustrated.

Positive goals

I joined community weight management classes. I was the only young male there. They asked me what my goal was. I told them, "I don't want to be fat." One lady named Ruth told me that my goal was negative. I needed to make it a positive statement. So I came up with: get in shape.

Specific, measurable, in writing

Ruth asked me how I would know when I'm "in shape." I thought that was a dumb question, but I answered, "When I lose all this fat." Ruth told me my goal has to be measurable, otherwise I'll never know if I hit it. I wrote that I would lose 50 pounds and 20% of body fat.

Attainable

Ruth asked my deadline. I picked Christmas, a couple of months away. But the classes taught me that such a goal was unhealthy. I had to make the goal more realistic; otherwise I would fail.

Time bound, monitor progress

I changed my date to the last day of school. Ruth created a progress chart for me with room to enter activities (like biking). It also had a place to list my weight and body fat. Thanks to Ruth, I could monitor progress.

Get in the habit

I scheduled bicycling on Tuesday, Thursdays, and Saturdays. I founded a riding club, which helped me meet people with similar interests. We rode together in scheduled events. Creating a schedule helps people meet their goals.

Why set goals

Some things people want seem unobtainable, because getting to that point in their lives seems too difficult. People put more faith in winning the lottery than in their ability to reach life-long goals. If you want to accomplish something worthwhile, set SMARTER (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound, Evaluate, Reevaluate) goals.

If you have a question about your child's attendance at school, feel that your child refuses to go to school, or have a question about your child's education, you can Email Dr. Kay at DrJimK@yahoo.com and your question with his answer may be published in this magazine.