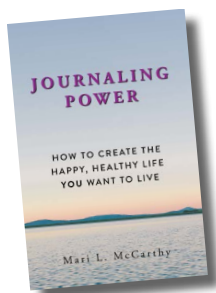
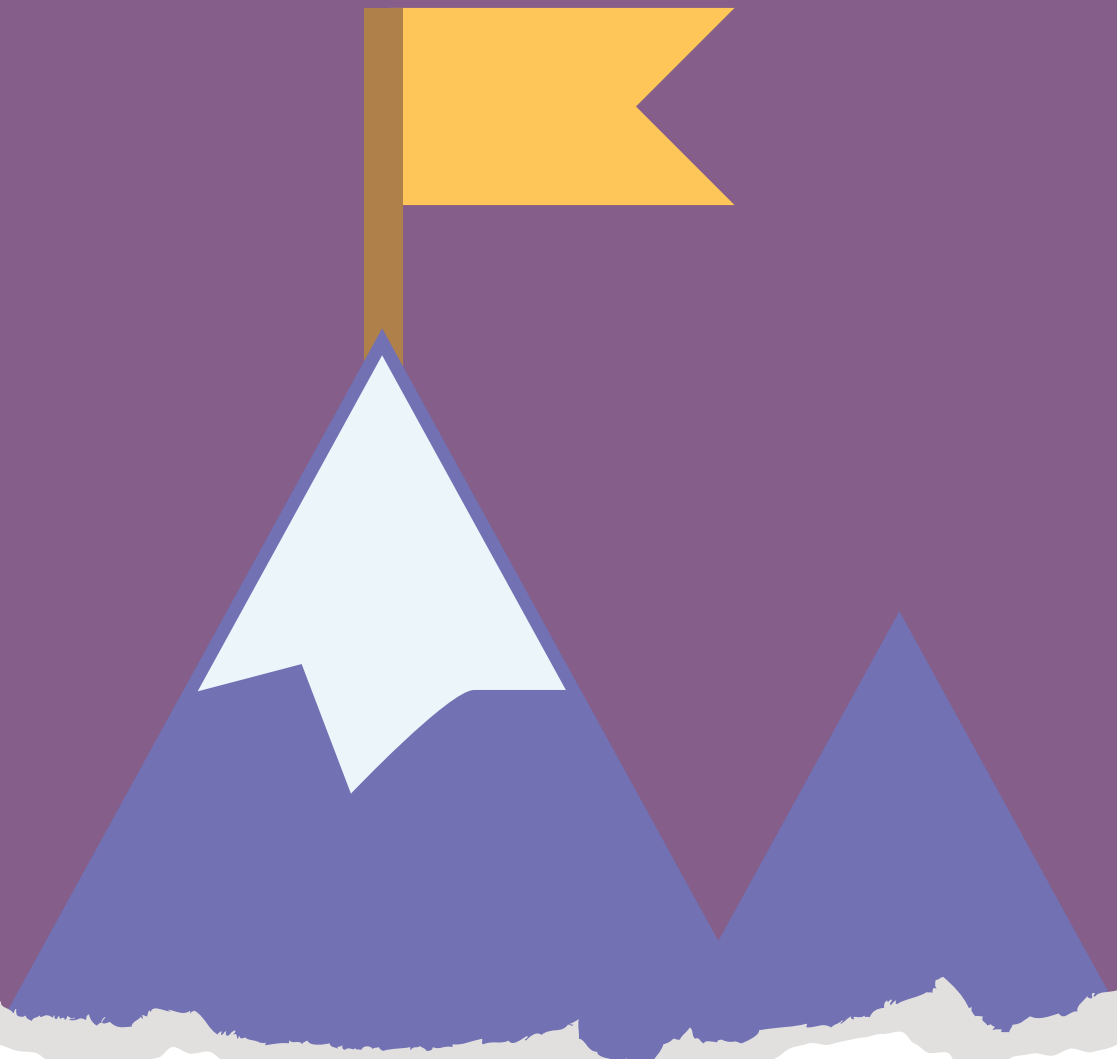


By Mari L. McCarthy

Goal Getting

in 7 Days!



Self-Paced Journaling Course

CreateWriteNow.com

Goal Getting

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Introduction

“You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.”

– C. S. Lewis

We are often so caught up in our hectic day-to-day schedules that we lose sight of the bigger picture. We don't leave enough time to pause, reflect and refocus, and we don't leave enough space to ask ourselves, “Is this what I want? Am I heading in the right direction? What do I really want to do?” This trend can take its toll on mental and physical health, leading to stress, unhappiness, boredom and a general lack of focus.

With everything that is clamoring for your attention – work, family, friends, pets, hobbies, technology – it's more important than ever to set aside time to select your personal goals and work toward them. You may have a long list of goals you would like to accomplish someday, yet you haven't quite gotten around to training for a marathon or starting a photography blog or hiking Machu Picchu.

That all changes now! Now is your opportunity to take ownership of your dreams and make them a reality.

How Journaling Can Help

Journaling is the ideal way to bring focus, accountability and enthusiasm to your goals. Research shows that keeping a written account of your objectives increases your chances of success. In one study from Dominican University, participants who wrote down their goals and action steps, shared this information with a friend and sent the friend weekly updates were on average 33 percent more successful in accomplishing their goals than those who merely formulated goals.

By writing in your journal, you are able to make vague ideas concrete and get excited about pursuing what is important to you.

How to Use This Book

This workbook is designed to guide you through seven different goalsetting exercises over the course of a week. Find a week when you will be able to set aside about an hour each day to write in your journal. Make it an experience you look forward to; find a peaceful place to write away from the hustle and bustle of the day.

There may be some chapters you find exhilarating and others you find exhausting, but keep going. Imagine how you will feel when you accomplish your hard-earned goals.

Let's get started!

Day 1: So Many Goals, So Little Time

What Do You Want?

There are two common problems when it comes to goal setting. In one scenario, you have no idea where to begin because you aren't sure what you want to do; in the other, you have no idea where to begin because you want to do too much!

Whether you fall into one of those categories or somewhere in between, it's best to start with a clean slate (or a blank page!) to help organize your thoughts and prioritize your goals.



Journaling Exercise #1

1. It would be overwhelming to write down everything you've ever wanted to accomplish in life, so instead, begin with a more specific brainstorm. What do you want to do in the next year? In five years? In 10 years? Dedicate one page to each of these categories.
2. For each of the three categories, give yourself five to 10 minutes to write down every idea that crosses your mind. Nothing is too small, too big, too silly or too outrageous – put it all down on the page, and have fun with it!

For example:

Within one year:

- Learn how to use my digital camera and start taking pictures
- Clean up my financial and legal affairs – update my will, investments and insurance policies
- Visit a US state I haven't been to yet

Within five years:

- Take a big family vacation with all the kids and grandkids – maybe go on a cruise or rent a beach house
- Negotiate a higher salary and more vacation days at my job
- Join (and stick with) some sort of fitness group – maybe a walking club or a rowing team

Within 10 years:

- Write and publish a cookbook of regional and family recipes
- Buy a house
- Travel to southeast Asia

3. Which ideas are you most excited about? Which do you think will be most challenging? Which do you think will be most rewarding? Explore these questions in your journal, then circle one goal from each category that you would most like to see realized.

Day 2: Your Top Three

Picking Favorites

In the previous chapter, you brainstormed a list of goals you want to accomplish in three categories: within the next year, the next five years and the next decade and chose one from each category that is most important to you. Now that you've had a night to let your ideas marinate, let's take a closer look at them in the following journaling exercise.

For this chapter, try to stay focused on what you want most for your future and not be influenced by what you feel obligated, pressured or expected to achieve. This workbook is just for you, so feel free to dream big!



Journaling Exercise #2

1. Start by rereading all three of your top goals and writing them at the top of a fresh page in your journal. Are they related, or do they have any common themes, values or background?
2. Now spend some time with each of your goals individually. Get to know them better by using these questions as a starting point in your journal:
 - Why did you select this goal? What about it do you find most appealing? Why do you think you are drawn to it?
 - What interests does it engage? What other experiences does it draw from?
 - What values does it support? How do these values fit into your overall approach toward life?
 - How do you envision the process of working toward your goal? What do you want to learn? How do you want to grow?
 - What short-term and long-term positive changes do you hope to see in your life when you reach your goal? How will you be affected in different ways (mentally, emotionally, financially, professionally, etc.)? Why are these changes important to you?
 - How will others be affected or influenced by you working toward and achieving your goal? Who do you think will be the most supportive?

For example:

For my goal within the next year, I chose to get all of my financial and legal affairs in order. It's not the most exciting goal from my list, but I know how important it is to my future and the future of my family. I have ignored my long-term plans – savings, retirement, life insurance, legal will – for years because it seems easier right now to avoid topics that make me uncomfortable. But I don't know what will happen, and I worry that being unprepared will hurt the people I care about.

3. Close each of your goal entries with one sentence summarizing the main idea you want to keep in mind going forward. You can refer back to this if you need support or motivation in the future.

For example:

Building a strong financial foundation is the best way I can safeguard my family's future and ease my current tension and worry.

Day 3: The Right Place

Environmentally Friendly

Your current environment has a powerful effect on how you pursue your goals and handle challenges along the way. This can include factors such as your work situation, your mental and physical health, your personal support system and your attitude toward change. To be successful, you must create the right conditions for your goals to be able to thrive. Imagine that you are preparing to plant a garden; you need to take the soil, sunlight and other environmental factors into account to make sure your plants will be able to grow healthy and strong.

In this chapter, you will take a closer look at your surroundings right now. Are you heading in the right direction to reach your goals already, or have you been focusing on a different path? What kind of support – from people, money or other resources – do you need to reach your goals?



Journaling Exercise #3

1. It might seem difficult at first to describe the complex or abstract parts of your personal environment. Make these concepts more tangible (and more fun) by beginning with a drawing exercise.

Take out a pen or some colored pencils and, in your journal, sketch a picture of yourself surrounded by the most important elements that shape your life (don't worry about your art skills!). You may love drawing and want to spend time making detailed depictions, or you may feel inclined to use words or simple symbols, such as several hearts to represent your family members, instead. Do what makes sense for you, and try to represent aspects from all of the diverse parts of your life. For example:

- Demanding but satisfying job
 - Supportive family
 - Struggles with anxiety
 - Love of trying new things but fear and insecurity about taking big risks
 - Limited finances
2. When you have finished your drawing, try to view it objectively. What would you say, as an outsider, about this person's environment? What factors seem healthy and conducive to setting goals? Which seem unhealthy or detrimental? Why? Write your observations in your journal.

3. Now observe your drawing through your own perspective again. What does it tell you about what you need from your surroundings to be successful in reaching your goals? What clues does it give you about what you need to minimize or eliminate? Write a short description of your ideal environment for setting and achieving goals.

For example:

To be able to pursue my goals, I need structured, scheduled time to work. I also need to be surrounded by positive support. I tend to doubt myself and second-guess my actions, so it is damaging if I have people or other factors around me that increase my level of self-criticism.

Day 4: Roadblocks

What's Getting in Your Way?

Your most important goals often have deep roots, even if the specifics have developed more recently. Perhaps you have always known you would pursue your love of music in some way, but you weren't quite sure how until this year. Or maybe you have always dreamed of channeling your passion for adventure and the outdoors into hiking the Appalachian Trail, but you haven't yet put your plan into action.

It's all too common to put these dreams off until "someday" when you have more time, more money, more flexibility or any number of other reasons. But what is really holding you back from getting started now on your goals?



Journaling Exercise #4

1. Write your first goal at the top of a blank page in your journal. Look back at your responses to the questions in Chapter 2 and think about how this goal demonstrates your interests, values and approach to life. Focus on the following questions and write about how and when this goal developed:
 - What first planted the seed for your goal? Was there a particular event, experience or person that had an influence on you?
 - How did it develop over time? Was it a gradual process, or a sudden lightning bolt of inspiration?
 - When was this? How old were you at the time? Do you remember any details about this "aha moment"?

For example:

I have been an avid hiker since I was a little kid. My parents would even take me on trails in one of those baby backpacks before I could walk! I heard about the Appalachian Trail hike when I was in high school, and I just knew that I had to do it one day.

2. Think about the time between when you first started forming your goal and now. Describe some of the fears, challenges or obstacles that may have held you back in the past:
 - How long have you been thinking about this goal? Does it come to mind often? When it does, how does it affect your emotions?
 - What do you think is the biggest reason you haven't yet accomplished it? What are some of the smaller reasons?
 - Have you tried to work toward this goal in the past? If so, what happened? What made you stop?
 - Do you feel that fear has hindered your progress? What is your biggest fear? In your mind, what is the worst-case scenario if your fears are realized?

For example:

It's been 25 years now since I set my sights on this hike, and I've toyed with the idea of doing it a few times in the past, but I've never gotten past the initial brainstorming phase. Time has always been a challenge; either I was in school or working, and it was tough to take time off. I'm also intimidated by the physical fitness and endurance the hike requires. I wonder if now I've waited too long and I'm getting too old to do it.

3. Complete the same exercises with your other two goals, and read your responses again, noting the similarities and differences.

Day 5: The First Move

Starting Strong

Taking the first step toward an important goal can feel intimidating. If you overthink the situation and get too far ahead of yourself before you begin, you might start doubting your abilities or be tempted to procrastinate.

Take a deep breath and relax: it's normal to feel a little overwhelmed at the beginning of a new journey. Remember that you have the power to dictate your own pace, make your own rules and set your own milestones. Pursuing what is important to you is empowering and exciting, and it all begins with one small first step.



Journaling Exercise #5

1. For this chapter, you are going to put the big picture aside and focus only on the immediate future. This will help you make initial progress without being paralyzed by your long-term to-do list. Write your goal for the next year at the top of a blank page of your journal. Do the same for your five-year and 10-year goals.
2. Reflect on your first goal. What are some simple actions that you can start and complete within the next few days? How long will each of them take? Brainstorm a list of at least five to 10 tasks.

For example: One-year goal: Apply to graduate school.

First steps:

- Do initial online research on academic programs that fit my interests (time: an afternoon).
 - Go to the library and check out books on the fields I'm interested in and grad school admissions. Start reading these books (time: 2 hours).
 - Call or send emails to friends, acquaintances and family members who have experience in my field of study or know people who do. Ask if they would have time to chat with me (time: 2 hours).
 - Print or bookmark academic calendars and admissions guidelines for the programs that interest me. Mark dates on my calendar (time: 1 hour).
3. Underneath your list, write down your thoughts on how you feel planning these first steps. Are you relieved, nervous, stressed, ecstatic? Do you feel as if these steps are reasonable and achievable? If yes, write down a date by which you would like to finish them. If no, go back to your list and tweak it so that it sets realistic expectations.
 4. Repeat this process for your five-year and 10-year goals, remembering to stay focused on easy, short-term steps that will put you on the right path (but won't overwhelm or intimidate you as you get started).

Day 6: Managing Fear and Frustration

Strong Words

Fear and frustration are powerful emotions; they can hold you hostage, cripple your decision-making skills and prevent you from moving forward with your goals. When you are challenging yourself to venture outside your comfort zone and try something new, you will inevitably have moments where you feel scared or discouraged and ready to quit, but it is important to know how to cope with those feelings and keep going.



In this chapter, you will explore your common reactions to challenging situations and find ways to play up your strengths and overcome your weaknesses.

Journaling Exercise #6

1. Write about a time when you were faced with an obstacle that derailed your progress toward a goal. What were you trying to achieve? What happened to throw you off course? How did you react? Why?

For example:

A few years ago, I had developed some health problems and was trying to get myself back to healthy habits: eating better, exercising more and, most importantly, quitting smoking. I wanted to quit and was determined to do it without the aid of patches or gum or anything, but I kept slipping up. I'd have a stressful day at work and sneak out for "just one" cigarette or go to a party where everyone else was smoking and fall into old habits. Every time I slipped, I would beat myself up over it and feel really guilty, and it got to the point where I figured, "What's the point?"

What did you learn about yourself and your needs from this experience?
How do you think you could have reacted differently for a better outcome?
Did you eventually reach this goal? What were the secrets to your success?

For example:

I did end up quitting smoking, but it took a lot of false starts for me to realize what I was doing wasn't working. For a long time, I thought if I had enough willpower and discipline, I could kick the habit on my own. I eventually realized that I needed more outside support and accountability to stick with my plan. I talked to my doctor for advice, started weaning myself off nicotine with the patch and rallied a group of friends to quit along with me. It was still hard and took a long time (and some more slip-ups), but it was much more realistic once I had set up a safety net to help me when I struggled.

2. Now think of another situation when you faced fear or frustration while working toward a goal, but you were able to stay on track and overcome the challenges. How did you react differently than in the first story? What actions were key to your success?

For example:

At the beginning of my career, I was offered a great job in my field. The only problem was that the job was 3,000 miles away from my family and anyone I knew. I had never moved far from home before, and I was nervous, but the job was a wonderful opportunity and I felt I had to take it. The first few months in my new city were up and down – exciting but also very lonely – but I made myself promise that I would stick it out for at least a year. I ended up staying for five years and growing a lot professionally and personally.

What did you learn about yourself and your needs from this experience?
How can you use these lessons when faced with future challenges?

For example:

I learned that sometimes you have to make yourself uncomfortable or even unhappy for a period of time to be able to have some of the most rewarding and life-changing experiences. In this case, I had to make a leap of faith and do something that scared me, forcing myself to give it a fair shot for a set period of time. It would have been much easier to give up after a month and head back to what was safe and comfortable, but because I had set a timeline for myself, I had to stick it out, and it was worth it in the end.

3. What are the main takeaways from what you have just written? What factors help you reach your goals more easily? What tricks, tips or pieces of advice can you give yourself for when the going gets tough? Write yourself a cheat sheet or pep talk to read when you need extra encouragement and support.

Day 7: Go For It

A Toolbox for Success

Setting and accomplishing major goals is not an overnight process. It takes hard work and perseverance, as well as passion and enthusiasm, to figure out what is important to you and to create a plan of action to pursue it.

Over the last week, you have determined what you want to achieve in the next year, the next five years and the next 10 years (no small feat!). You've explored your strengths and weaknesses, as well as what you need from your environment, your inner self and your support network to help you be successful. You are now ready to move forward with your goals; in this final chapter, you will develop a few more useful tools to help you along the way.



Journaling Exercise #7

Time management

It seems as if there are never enough hours in the day to complete everything on your to-do list, but being able to organize your time is essential to making progress in your goals.

Do you have a current strategy or approach toward time management? What works well? What do you find most challenging? What time of day is best for you to work on personal projects? Brainstorm some strategies that will allow you to make the most of your precious spare time.

For example:

If I go with the flow and don't plan anything, I end up never making time for projects. I do better when I look at a monthly calendar as well as my daily schedule and block off small periods of time each day. I also work full time, so I'm pretty exhausted when I get home in the evening. Saturdays or early mornings on weekdays are my most productive times.

Prioritizing

Since your time is so valuable, it is important to be able to rank which tasks deserve your attention first and which can be placed on the backburner for the moment.

Do you feel comfortable with prioritizing what to work on and when? Do you often struggle with balancing the different demands in your life? What helps, and what doesn't? Record your observations in your journal.

For example:

I often want to do everything all at once, and it's hard for me to accept that I have to do a little bit gradually over time. I think it would help to make a big chart, list or timeline of what needs to happen to reach each of my goals. That way I'd have a visual record of everything and can put the pieces of the puzzle together more easily.

Accountability

If you have ever had a regular gym date with a friend or have enrolled in a community college course to explore an interest, you know the value of accountability in achieving your goals (if you cancel on your exercise partner or miss a class lecture, someone else will notice and expect a good excuse for your absence). It's helpful to establish habits that encourage your responsibility and commitment, and an outside perspective can often be just the push you need.

What would be most useful accountability strategy for you – enlisting a friend to help you with the planning process, sending a weekly email update to a family member or having a casual check-in with your spouse over Sunday morning coffee? What will motivate you to stay on track and not be an unnecessary burden? Create a customized plan that works for you.

For example:

I need someone who is fair but tough to ask me for regular updates on my goals. One of my best friends is an event planner and very organized. If I ask her to check in with me every time I see her, I'll be more likely to stay focused.

Moving forward

It's easy to fall into this classic trap when you set a new goal: early excitement and a flurry of activity... then a long lull and a slower pace, eventually leading to waning interest and the abandonment of the project.

How can you keep your goals moving forward and not collecting dust? What can you do to stay motivated and enthusiastic about your objectives? Write a list of tips for yourself.

For example:

- *Take at least one small step toward my goal every day, even if it takes just five minutes*
- *Daydream about the day when I finally reach my goal (and throw a huge celebratory party)*
- *Skip one TV show if I think I don't have enough time*
- *Remember that an occasional misstep does not equal failure*
- *Be kind to myself – growth is hard*

Misc.

Personalize your goal toolbox. Add anything else that will help you as you work toward your goals.

Conclusion

Congratulations! You've completed the journaling challenge, and you're on a roll now.

Continue to make journaling an integral part of your life as a writer, and you will keep growing and thriving.

Good luck, and WriteON!

Mari



Share your experiences with the Goal Getting Journaling Challenge. Send your story (400-600 words, include a picture for the article, a personal pic, brief bio, and links) to mari@createnow.com and we'll feature you on [Mari's Journal Writing Power Blog](#).

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