

The following excerpt was taken from the “Peer Support Group Leader Training Manual for Chronic Pain” developed by Dr. Melissa Geraghty, Psy.D., Director of Mental Health and Support at the U.S. Pain Foundation.

Values vs Goals by Dr. Russ Harris

[youtube.com/watch?v=T-IRbuy4XtA&ab_channel=Dr.RussHarris-AcceptanceCommitmentTherapy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-IRbuy4XtA&ab_channel=Dr.RussHarris-AcceptanceCommitmentTherapy)

Smart Goals

Peer support group leaders can assist participants in setting realistic and achievable goals that align with their values and aspirations. Encourage participants to track their progress over time, emphasizing the importance of celebrating small victories and milestones, which can instill a sense of accomplishment and purpose despite the challenges they may be facing. Goal setting and progress tracking can be accomplished by forming SMART goals.

When navigating the complexities of living with chronic pain, setting SMART goals can be an effective strategy to foster a sense of control, direction, and accomplishment. **SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound**, providing a clear framework for individuals to outline objectives that are both realistic and meaningful within the context of managing chronic pain.

To begin setting SMART goals in the context of chronic pain, it's crucial to first identify specific areas for improvement or personal development. For example, an individual might aim to increase their physical activity levels, manage stress more effectively, or improve their sleep quality to better cope with the challenges of chronic pain. By articulating clear and specific objectives related to these areas, such as "to walk for 10 minutes every day" or "to practice mindfulness for 5 minutes each morning," individuals can establish a concrete starting point for their goal-setting process.

Moreover, ensuring that goals are measurable is essential in tracking progress and evaluating the effectiveness of chosen strategies. For instance, using quantifiable metrics like the number of steps taken per day, the frequency of meditation sessions, or the quality of sleep measured by hours of restful sleep can provide tangible indicators of progress and success.

Furthermore, setting achievable goals that are within one's physical capabilities and limitations is critical in maintaining motivation and preventing feelings of discouragement or overwhelm. Considering the realistic constraints imposed by chronic pain, individuals can tailor their goals to their unique circumstances and gradually build upon small achievements to create a sustainable and manageable path toward overall well-being.

Additionally, emphasizing the relevance of each goal to the broader objective of managing chronic pain effectively is essential in fostering a sense of purpose and direction. Aligning goals with individual priorities, values, and long-term aspirations can offer intrinsic motivation and a deeper sense of fulfillment throughout the goal-setting journey.

Lastly, incorporating a time-bound element by establishing specific timeframes or deadlines for achieving each goal can create a sense of urgency and accountability, motivating individuals to stay committed to their objectives and actively track their progress over designated periods. An example of this is, "I want to finish reading a chapter of a book by December 12th."

By adhering to the principles of SMART goal setting, individuals living with chronic pain can cultivate a proactive and structured approach to their self-care and well-being, fostering a greater sense of empowerment and resilience in their pain management journey.

You can do a Google search to find worksheets on SMART goals that you can share with your group participants.