



## Transcription of Video: “Supporting Kids at Home with Goal Setting”

For more goal setting resources, [click here](#)

Welcome to this presentation on Supporting Students with Goal Setting. I am Sharon Juenemann from The Shadow Project. We are a local Portland non-profit that partners with k-8 schools to make learning more accessible and engaging for children with learning challenges. I am also the parent of children with learning challenges, and like many of you, and trying to figure out ways to support my child’s needs with schools closed. I am going to share with you today tips for supporting your child’s behavior and academics with goal-setting. These tips are based on Shadow Project’s Goal Setting program, which special education teachers across Portland use to help their students persevere and develop self-confidence for learning.

**Parents** -- you can adapt this for home use to support positive routines, behaviors, and connection with your child during this stressful time. Teachers who use this program adapt it in many different ways, and I expect families will too. These resources are meant to be supportive and adaptable to your child or children, and your family situation. Take what’s helpful to you in this moment, and leave behind what’s not.

**Why focus on goals right now**, when we have so many other things going on in this stressful time? Goals give us a sense of control and accomplishment, and this is hugely important for our mental health during this crisis. When I identify something I want to do, and then I do it, I build a belief that I am capable of doing what I set out to achieve. And if I don’t achieve my goal, I can think about why I didn’t achieve it, make changes to my behavior, and keep trying. This helps me learn that I can grow from my mistakes. Goal setting helps me strengthen my attention on tasks, and persist even when things get hard. Goals build planning skills, so I can take on bigger and bigger challenges and projects over time. Goals also help us build empathy and connections to others. We think about who can help us and support us in our goals, and we develop awareness that everyone struggles at times. In short, goals help us build academic and life skills that we can use in many situations throughout our lives, including coping in difficult times like we are in now. These skills are especially important for kids with learning challenges because our kids often face greater and more frequent challenges in school and life, and stress, frustration, and anxiety can take over. Goal setting gives our kids the skills to face those challenges with confidence.

**Steps to guiding your child or children in goal setting**

Because many of us are very overwhelmed right now, I am going to break this down into short steps that you can spread out to make it more manageable. Remember to take it slow, eliminate anything you think is extra, adapt to your child's abilities and interests, expect setbacks, and forgive yourself and others when you make mistakes. This is about building skills, focusing on positives and strengths, and celebrating success.

**So, your first step** is to talk with your child about what goals are, and what purpose they serve. You can share goals that you have as a parent, like maybe taking deep breaths when you feel anxious, or trying to go for a walk each day. There are several great, short YouTube videos that explain goals in a fun way. Look for the links on the Resources document that comes with this video. These videos frame goals in terms of big long-term projects. But right now, with many of us just trying to get through the day, you'll probably want to think in terms of smaller goals. Things like remembering to wash hands, getting out of bed on time, or focusing on school work for 15 minutes at a time.

## **Step 2: Work with your child to choose a goal**

Many of us parents already have things in mind that we know our kids need to work on. It's important to develop goals in conversation with your child, so they are invested in achieving the goal. You can also prompt your child to think about something they want to achieve at school or at home. Offer your ideas. Make a list with them. If you are struggling for ideas, ask their teacher or school specialist for ideas.

For some kids, it's going to work better to offer several choices of goals, based on conversations you and your child have already had in the past about things they can get better at. In my home, for example, I might say: "So, for your goals, we've talked before about how family dinners are important. I know you love dessert at the end. We've also talked about how being clean and taking care of your body shows respect for yourself and others. Would you like to make your goal for this week sitting at the table for 10 minutes, or taking a bath 3 times a week?"

Whatever you do, it helps to choose a goal with the right level of challenge. For some kids, it's really important to have easy, early wins. So you want to guide them to a goal they can be successful at right away. Other kids will scoff at a goal that's too easy, and won't take it seriously. Talk through different ideas for goals, listen to their ideas, and see how they respond to your suggestions.

Choosing a goal might be the hardest part for some kids and families. You may want to spread this part out over several days and different casual conversations.

### **3. Write it down**

Someone once said, “A goal without a plan is just a wish.” Break the goal down into steps with your child by writing or drawing answers to four questions:

What’s your goal? Why’s it important to you?

What strengths do you have to help you?

What steps are you going to take to reach your goal?

Who can help you?

How will you celebrate when you do it?

So, for example, in my house my kids are having a hard time remembering to log on to Google classroom for weekly meetings with their teachers. I want them to be independent in doing this, because I just don’t have time or energy to keep track of it all for them and remind them each day. So my kid’s goal sheet looks like this. They told me their answers and I wrote it down for them because writing is hard for them and added more work.

You can totally pare this down, too. The most important questions are What’s your goal, what steps will you take, and how will you celebrate

It’s really helpful to post this paper someplace where your kid will see it frequently, like the fridge, their bedroom wall, or even taped to the bathroom mirror. If your child doesn’t read, they can also draw a picture of their goal and post it up at home. Or find an image online, or in a magazine. Or you can draw a picture for them.

### **4. Celebrate!**

So, you probably noticed that on the goals sheet part about celebration. Why is this part important? A few reasons. First, a lot of our kids are more literal, concrete thinkers who need a more hands on, tangible reward for their efforts. A goal like remembering to wash with soap is not that motivating for them. But a reward and celebration when they do it is motivating. Second reason is that our kids who struggle with learning really need that extra encouragement and celebration because they tend to get a lot more negative feedback throughout their day because of the things they are not doing. The celebration is you saying,

“Hey, I see you, I know you are working, and I am proud of you.” That’s going to help build your child’s confidence to continue to take on challenging tasks.

The celebration doesn’t have to be an object that you buy, either. It can be something silly like they get to throw a water balloon at you, or you make a favorite food and enjoy some together, or you watch a fun show together.

## **5. Tips to make it work for your child**

Get support from older siblings or other adults in your house. Get them to notice out loud when they see your child doing something positive toward their goal.

Do mini-celebrations or rewards when your child makes small steps toward their goal. Plan a checkpoint a week or a couple days in to connect with your child and talk about what’s going well. High fives, smiles, and encouraging words are cheap, and make all the difference.

Many kids will get really motivated by getting some small thing every time they take a step on their goal. You can award them colorful post it notes on the wall, smiley faces in their favorite crayon color, stickers, pennies in a jar, and other little things.

Know that some goals might take a long time to fully achieve and become a habit. Keep working, encouraging, and celebrating small successes. If after a while of trying, and it isn’t working, feel free to change up the goal. Think about what was working, and try making that the goal to build up your child’s confidence.

And finally, keep finding ways to praise. Especially if your child is struggling or not making much progress, find little positives to emphasize. This will help your child build their persistence, and belief in their ability to succeed with effort.