

Setting Goals in the New Year – Where to Start



In her book *Ten Fun Things to Do Before You Die*, Karol Jackowski presents an entertaining approach for getting us to consider how we are spending the precious days that make up our lives by encouraging us to make a list of all we want to accomplish or experience while on this earth. As mentors, we know the importance of goal-setting. However, the children we mentor may not have had the experience of setting goals with an adult.

Try introducing goal-setting to your mentee by talking about New Year's resolutions. Explain what a resolution is and why people make resolutions at the beginning of a new year. If you are willing, share some of yours. (No need to share that your past resolution to avoid chocolate was an abject failure!)

Next, ask your mentee to write down three to five resolutions having to do with school. You will need to help younger children with this activity. Make suggestions of attainable goals such as keeping a neater notebook, turning in all home-work assignments, getting along with classmates on the playground, improving grades in a particular class, etc.

As you revisit your list each week during the semester, select one item on the list which you can use to teach your mentee about setting powerful goals. First goals are specific. *They address:*

Who is involved?

What specifically do I want to accomplish?

Where will my efforts take place?

When will I take the action I'm describing?

Why am I setting this goal?

So, using the example above (getting along with classmates on the playground), you might inquire:

Who exactly is it that you want to improve your relationship with?

What exactly will you do to improve that relationship?

Will your efforts take place exclusively on the playground or will you make an effort to get along in the classroom as well?

When will you begin implementing your improvement plan?

Why did you decide to set this goal?

Keep the plan handy and revisit until the goals are accomplished. Reward progress towards the goals with stickers, special activities together, or a certificate! Another central idea is that sometimes our plan to reach our goals does not turn out to be successful. Help your mentee know that this is okay; that intent to change or improve is always admirable; and that the key benefit to effort is what one has learned along the way. Ask your mentee if s/he would like to make a revised plan and try again.

Teach your mentee that goal setting is

- not just for children, but something that adults do all the time. Make this a part of your relationship going forward.
- not just for school, but can be used in all areas of life, building confidence, and empowering them to reach for the stars.

Thank you for using your time together to build your mentee's potential!