How Do I Analyze My Goals?

When you are finished writing your goals, analyze them to be sure each has the three criteria required and that the goals align with your skills, interests, and values.

Analysis requires asking hard and sometimes complex questions and searching for accurate and in-depth answers to those questions. We want to build a balanced and fulfilling life, so questions must be examined before we commit to this set of goals.

- **Do I have the skills and abilities needed to achieve these goals, and if I don't possess the skill now, can I attain it with hard work and an action plan?**

- **Does my family situation allow me to pursue these goals without causing harm or distress to the ones I love?**

- **Do I know the daily tasks that people perform in the career I've chosen, and do I enjoy the tasks? Which ones will be easy to do, and which ones will seem challenging? Am I up to this challenge?**

- **Have I created a realistic timeframe in which I can achieve the goal?**

- **Will working in this profession align with my values in life?**

- **Am I willing to commit to the time, planning, and effort it will take to achieve these life-time goals?**

- **Are my goals written in positive language so that working on them encourages optimism rather than anxiety?**

**Guided Practice in Analysis**

The first step of analysis is to check for meeting criteria: **single item** that is **measurable** with an **estimated completion date**. Examine each goal to be sure it is measurable. For instance, if our TCC student Sylvia wants to hit a target weight of 130 pounds, she must be sure the goal is measurable and that it is achievable in the amount of time she has allowed for the goal. Which is the best long-term goal (or goals) based on her current weight of 192 pounds.

A. **I will lose weight by the end of the semester (four months)**

B. **I will eat healthy and exercise every week until I weigh 140 pounds**

C. **I will lose 20 pounds a month every month for the next 4 months.**

D. **I will hit a target weight of 130 pounds by (eight months from now).**

The goal that meets all the criteria and has a positive answer to all the questions in our analysis is the final goal, D. No one wants to **lose** weight, so the language isn’t conducive to modifying behavior, especially when it comes to a difficult goal such as reaching a desirable weight. Therefore, all the goals containing the word “lose” are weak goals. Everyone likes to hit the mark or the target, so wording the goal as a challenge to succeed creates a positive goal. However, the goal that notes to “eat healthy and exercise every week” is a dual goal, one requiring exercise and good nutrition—two
distinct actions. Sylvia might do well exercising but because she hasn’t modified her diet, she doesn’t lose weight and she feels discouraged. Also, the goal has no accountability since there is no estimated date for the goal to be completed.

The final goal allows eight months to reach a target weight of 130 pounds, which means a realistic weight loss of about 5-8 pounds a month. The goal meets all the criteria, and can now be broken into the action map for achieving the long-term goal. Breaking the goal into intermediate and short term goals is the next step in long-term planning. Before moving on to the next step, take time now to use the analysis questions and revise your own goals.