



Set a Powerful Goal

Module Two, Session Two

In this session of The Performance Project, you're going to set a goal and learn to give it power. Years ago, when I first started helping people set and accomplish goals, I was not 100% on board with the process myself. Like most horse people, I'd had my fair share of heartbreak and failure. I conceptually understood why it could be good to set goals but I had yet to really understand the power of the process. It seemed to me that there were so many unknowns with horses and so many opportunities for things to go sideways. I had a hard time understanding how setting goals could not be all about risk and disappointment.

Since then, I've come to believe that setting goals actually creates resilience. It requires us to get grit, be flexible and stay committed to our larger dreams. Over the years, I've observed that goals that come to fruition, share some common characteristics. These are also the goals that cultivate a sense of fulfillment and happiness. I've developed a goal setting manifesto, of sorts, that can supercharge your goal and give it more power than it would have if you just kept it clanking around in your brain.

There are two reasons I've become a total hard-ass when it comes to the goal setting process. One is that I know, from personal experience and from coaching hundreds of people through the process, how well it works when it's done intentionally.

The other is that I see people doing it poorly or not doing it at all, all the time. I know they're missing out on a lot because of it. I think goal setting is a skill that everyone should have and use regularly, like a muscle, in order to live fully.

People, who feel accomplished, empowered and live regret-free lives tend to have more to offer others. They're also less likely to be bitter, resentful or behave in destructive

ways. What it comes down to is that a world filled with these people is one I want to live in. That's why I do this myself and that's why I do this with my clients.

In this program, I'm going to ask you to set a riding goal.

Answer this question:

If you and I were to run into each other six months from now, what would you LOVE to be able to say had happened in your riding?

Write the answer to this question down. Write what comes first to your mind. It might take several sentences or come out in a list. It's all good.

Now edit your riding goal through each of these steps.

- 1. State your goal in the past or present tense.** Language creates your experience! As long as you keep saying that you "will" do something, that thing will stay in the future. When you say your goal out loud, it should give you the experience of having already accomplished it. Most people state their goals in the future: "I will get my bronze medal." Instead, articulate it as if it has already happened: "By October, I have earned my bronze medal." This is probably the most important characteristic of a powerful goal. It's also the one that many people find challenging. Saying it as if it's already happened can require the same kind of COURAGE that accomplishing it does. Take some time now to rewrite your goal in the past or present tense.
- 2. Include both a measurable result and an intention.** Each goal should state WHY it's important to you and tell you how you'll know when you've accomplished it. These are two distinct components. If you want to climb Mt. Everest, why is that important to you? "I climb Mt. Everest this year (measurable result.) I overcome my fear of heights and fulfill a life-long dream (intention.)" Usually, one of these is easy and you have to dig a bit for the other. If you have only an intention- ask yourself how you will know when you've accomplished it? What measurable goal would inspire you to accomplish it? With the Mt Everest example in mind, take some time now to make sure your goal includes both a measurable result and an intention.
- 3. Make your goal concise. Use powerful descriptive words.** Keep your goal to between one and four complete declarative sentences that start with the pronoun, "I". Use words that inspire you. Say what you mean with purpose. If you

need to, add some meaningful descriptive words into your goal.

4. **DO NOT PLAN while you're constructing your goal.** Strategies come after goals. Planning works best after you've decided exactly what you want. If you start planning while you are setting your goal, you risk getting bogged down in self-doubt or limiting beliefs right off the bat. Resist the temptation to think about how and focus on what!
5. **Make sure your goal is within your control and that it reflects your own desires.** Your goal should not rely on the performances of others. If you have a goal that involves competition, rankings and placings are less effective than scores and personal bests. Dig deep to decide if your goal is really yours. Sometimes, in our desire to please others, we don't even realize that our goals are actually what others want for us rather than what we want for ourselves.
6. **Make it a stretch goal.** Your goal should live just up against the edge of your comfort zone. This is not about making outrageous, unrealistic goals. It just means that if your goal doesn't scare you a little bit or give you butterflies, it's not worth making. If a goal doesn't really matter to you, it will be difficult to stay motivated. A stretch goal will feel challenging and attainable at the same time. When I work with riders, 90% of them tend to set goals that underestimate their and their horses' abilities. Only a few are inclined to set unrealistic goals. Trainers play an important role in helping their students stretch. When I ask a client, "What would your trainer say?", they sheepishly give me the real stretch goal rather than the minimized one they started with.
7. **Avoid using words like "lose", "gain", "more" and "better"- all of which refer to a current or past state.** Do you want to lose weight or do you want to weigh 150 pounds, feel fabulous in your white breeches and be able to touch your toes? Do you want to be a "better rider" or "sit the trot beautifully and ride a second level dressage test with balance and harmony?" Focus on what you want and claim it.
8. **Attach a time frame to your goal. Be willing to change and update it.** Your goal needs a container. This will help you stay in action and track your progress. That said, our horses often inspire us to change our timelines. They go lame or have a training issue or need more time. It's more important that you claim a destination and head out in a direction, than that you actually end up in the exact spot you set out for. Let go of the idea that goal setting is a linear process. Be kind to yourself if you get new information and need to move the goal posts.

- 9. Share your goal.** Write it down. Say it out loud. Statistics from the American Society of Training and Development claim that you will improve your chances of accomplishing your goal by 65%-95% when you write it down and tell someone about it. Choose carefully who you share your goal with. Sometimes, the people who love you the most will collude with your Inner Critic and can seem the least supportive. This is totally natural and does not mean there is anything wrong with the relationship. Share your goal with someone who you know will get it and support you.

A powerful goal is one to four sentences long and stated in the past or present tense. It contains a measurable result and an intention. It should excite, scare or motivate you. It may feel a little uncomfortable when you say it out loud. Remember that if you are not uncomfortable, you're not growing! Take a moment to read your goal out loud to yourself right now.

Goals only have power if you give it to them. Write your goal down. Say it out loud. Put it somewhere you'll see it regularly. Make sure it contains language you find inspiring. Share it with someone who will be on your side and support you.

Have fun with it!