

# Creating S.M.A.R.T. Objectives

**S**pecific

**M**easurable

**A**ttainable

**R**ealistic/Relevant

**T**imely/Timebound

**Specific:** A specific objective has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general objective. To set a specific objective you must answer certain questions:

\*What: What am I asking to be done? Use action-oriented verbs to set up your objective. Examples: Identify, Develop, List, Explore, Think about, Describe, Participate in, Seek out, Name, Define, Explain, Attend

\*Which or Numbers: Identify minimum requirements or constraints. Examples: List 5 things, Identify 3 ways, Describe one thing about yourself, Think about A situation when, Explore at least 3 options.

\*Where or Context: Identify a location (i.e. at work, at home, in class, in treatment) or context (i.e. when I am angry, when I am stressed, when I am with my family) in which the objective will take place. For example: "Identify and document 3 situations at work over a one-week period that cause stress for you."

\*When: If applicable, identify when you are asking the activity in the objective to take place. Example: Keep a journal for one week, For two weeks, track the number of times you feel stressed or anxious, Attend 3 treatment sessions in the next month, Over 5 days.

\*Why or Motivation for doing so (Intrinsic Motivation bonus): Specific reasons, purpose or benefits, need to do so or perceived ability of accomplishing the goal (DARN – Desire, Ability, Reason, Need)

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, "Avoid stressful situations." But a specific goal would say, "Identify and document 3 situations at work over a one-week period that cause stress for you."

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**Measurable** - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each objective you set.

When you measure your progress, you help clients stay on track, reach their target dates, and experience the satisfaction of checking off or completing their objectives or steps towards achieving their overarching goal.

To determine if an objective is measurable, ask questions such as.....

How will I know when it is accomplished? When will I know this is “check-off-able”?

For example: “Identify and **document 3 situations** over the next week that cause stress for you.” You will know when this objective is complete after your client has documented 3 different situations that cause stress.

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**Attainable** – When you help clients identify goals that are important to them, they begin to figure out ways they can make them happen. Objectives should be structured so that clients can achieve them within their own capacity, time and housing constraints, yet objectives also challenge them to develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and general capacity to reach them.

For example, if a client has literacy issues, ask him or her to express themselves through other mediums in order to accomplish an objective, like thinking about and discussing, illustrating through a picture, demonstrating through song lyrics of their choice. Keep in mind attainability for clients who don’t speak English as their primary language or who also experience developmental disabilities or are hard of hearing, etc.

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**Realistic/Relevant**- To be realistic, an objective must be something that a client is both *willing* and *able* to do. To be relevant, an objective should match the needs, interests and abilities of the client.

Referring someone who does not have a drug or alcohol problem to treatment classes is not a relevant objective. Asking someone who is gang involved to define the terms “pro-social” and “anti-social” or identify positive and negative characteristics of people s/he knows is a relevant objective.

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**Timely/Timebound** – An objective should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it, there is no sense of urgency or clarity about the due date of the objective. If you and your client set an objective that states “Identify and document 3 situations over a one-week period that cause stress for you. Keep track of any patterns you see,” the client will not know by when s/he should complete this objective. If you anchor it within a timeframe, “Identify and document 3 situations over a one-week period that cause stress for you. Keep track of any patterns you see. Discuss your situations and any patterns with your case manager at your next monthly meeting,” the client will have clear direction on when this objective needs to be completed by.