

Visions, Goals & Habits

Everyone knows the importance of setting goals, especially as you a training season. As runners, we often live and die by the goals we set. Mileage and pace; PRs and podiums. Goals are what keep us motivated, but is that all there is to it?

A goal is really just one part of any successful endeavor, athletically, academically, entrepreneurially or otherwise. What you really need to start with is a vision. A vision is a personal mission statement; existential by nature, it serves as your credo. Runners' visions should not be tied just one season, but instead address the omnipotent question of why we are running in the first place? By establishing a vision (or mission), you are less likely to get bogged down in details or negative thoughts after one bad run or workout.

Once you have become reasonably comfortable with your mission, it is easier to set clear goals. These expectations are typically outcome-specific, and can be measured using a predetermined metric. You may be familiar with the concept of SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound) goals. Using this acronym can help establish reasonable, and ultimately rewarding, objectives.

So how do you achieve these goals? Is being "SMART" enough? Your vision is supported by your goals, and your goals need to be supported by your habits. In James Clear's New York Times bestselling book *Atomic Habits*, the author introduces us to a "systems-first" mentality. Clear argues that "problems arise when you spend too much time thinking about your goals and not enough time designing your systems." He posits that well-designed systems are a more efficient and sustainable practice towards achieving goals, and consequently, realizing visions.

None of these components is any more important than another, because they all work in conjunction to actualize quantifiable success. Visions are process-oriented, goals are outcome-specific and habits simply behavioral patterns. I believe in taking time every day to reaffirm your vision, remind yourself of your goals and strategically implement habits that are aligned with both.