How to Make Better Goals in the Water

By Olivier Poirier-Leroy//Contributor | Wednesday, February 20, 2019

Having goals in the water is important. They keep you focused during those long workouts. They help get you out of bed on those early mornings. And yet, so many swimmers struggle with them.

Here are three ways to set yourself up for goal-setting success:

1. Write out what you want to achieve.

You might be tempted to skip over this step, because, well, you *already know* what you want to achieve, am I right?

But writing it out (with a pen and paper, we're going old school here, folks) is critical.

Don't pop open a new Word file. Or text it to yourself. Or post it on Facebook. Write out your goal on an actual piece of paper. And the reasons why you want to achieve it.

Why is this so important?

Typing, whether on your phone or on a computer keyboard, has a way of separating ourselves from the content. Going old-school and physically writing out more fully engages and lights up our brain, making the connection deeper.

Having your goal and the reasons you want to achieve it on paper also makes it real, and pulls it out of the lofty ambitions that are continuously floating around the noodle between our ears.

When you can see your goal on paper, it pulls it out of the clouds and down into the here-and-now. Take a couple moments to write out your goal and why it's so important to you.

2. Go as small as you need to in order to stay on track.

I cannot over-emphasize this point enough…And if you have read my column here more than a couple times, you have probably heard me preach it about 43.5 times…

If you're struggling to stay on track, start over and start smaller. Start as small as you need to in order to make things stick.

- If you are having a hard time sticking to performing five dolphin kicks off every wall, start with three. Do it until you are nailing it, and then up to four we go.
- If you keep falling off in terms of being consistent in practice, focus only on making the workouts for this week. Don't even think about what's beyond.

I get why we are naturally averse to doing things in small steps. Small steps don't feel significant enough. They don't feel like they are creating enough change for us in the time we want.

But don't be fooled. <mark>Small steps might seem inconsequential, but added up, over time? Big-time awesome.</mark>

3. Get self-aware.

The more you understand yourself, the more you understand the best way you perform, and the more you understand what works in your particular case, the more likely you'll finally be able to make the changes and improvements you so badly want.

<mark>While improving your self-awareness won't solve everything, it's a massive and absolutely essential first step.</mark>

Start by tracking your performance in the pool.

- *Look at your training objectively.* Breaking down the way you are swimming in practice is step one. We suffer from a variety of biases that taint how we think we train. Having your training history written out, results included, gives you a measure of objectivity.
- *Review regularly.* The most powerful way to break the chain of our bad habits is to become aware of them. Regular review and assessment will shine a light on the poor habits in and out of the pool.
- *Plan out how you want to train.* Start setting daily and weekly goals for yourself in the pool to close the gap between how you want to perform and how you are actually performing. Doing so will help you create more realistic expectations that will keep you going long past the point where the "all-or-nothing" crowd falls off.

It's not too late to get your goals back on track.

That doesn't mean you should wait for tomorrow, though.

Start today, and let tomorrow be day two.

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*He's the author of **[Conquer the Pool: The Swimmer's Ultimate Guide to a High-Performance Mindset](#)**, a 300-page workbook that gives swimmers the tools and knowledge necessary to bulletproof their performances in the pool.*