



## **Set Small Goals**

By Dr. Linda Hancock

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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Five years ago, my youngest son, Mark, was managing a large trucking company in Saskatoon. The work was demanding. He didn't think he was in a career. Because of his obvious passion for helping people his friends told him that he should be a mediator.

Mark called me to discuss his options and I recommended that he enter a profession where he could be licensed. Mediators do not have a regulatory body and licensing is therefore not possible. After several months of thought, Mark decided he wanted to follow in my footsteps and become a Registered Psychologist.

I didn't want to be negative, but the process requires a minimum of eight years of study and practice. I really didn't want him to feel overwhelmed. My suggestion therefore was that he break the goal down into two-year manageable pieces that each have a good exit option. That way, he could work for two years and then if he wanted a break he could work for a while. I suggested that he look at a Social Work program because if you have a degree in Social Work you can work anywhere in the world, so options are plentiful.

In 2012, Mark sold his house, truck and tools. He, his wife, and young daughter moved from Saskatoon to Medicine Hat and even though he hadn't been in school for seventeen years, Mark started a two-year Social Work diploma program at the Medicine Hat College. He had good job opportunities when he graduated but decided to tackle the next two-year segment. Time passed quickly and Mark is now looking forward to graduation from the University of Calgary with a degree in Social Work this fall. The time went faster than he had expected, and he is so pleased with the choices that he made. Mark is now in the process of setting up the third two-year segment of his plan which will give him a Master's degree.

**SMART** is an acronym that is used to help guide people when they are setting goals. When you are planning objectives make sure that they are:

**Specific** - Be very detailed about exactly what you want.

**Measurable** - How will you know that you are making progress and when you have reached success?

**Attainable** - There isn't any point in chasing after something that you will never catch.

**Realistic** - Is your goal practical and does it make sense?

**Timely** - When do you want to reach the finish line? Does your plan allow this to happen?

There is an old expression that states, "If wishes were horses then beggars would ride". Wishing doesn't allow you to reach your dreams. Planning does.

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!

Why not use Mark's example and the SMART formula to lay out a plan that will help you to take one step at a time towards the thing you really want? You will be surprised at how quickly that your dreams will come true.