



Building Resilience Through Setting Realistic Expectations

WREP Quick Tool #1

Setting realistic expectations will help with client well-being and happiness. An important aspect of helping your clients build resilience and manage emotions is teaching them how to set realistic expectations for themselves. Much of the psychological and emotional pain and discomfort experienced in life is a product of the unrealistic expectations we set for ourselves. When clients set unrealistic expectations for themselves, they are likely to feel discouraged if they don't meet that expectation. It is natural to experience setbacks and failures in life. However, setting realistic expectations gives clients more opportunities to meet expectations and feel successful.

Being able to *set an expectation and meet it* builds confidence and helps clients feel empowered to make meaningful changes in their lives.

How to Help Your Clients Set Realistic Expectations For themselves

- 1. Know Your Limits** - It's crucial for your clients to know their limitations, whether it applies to ability, time, or any other factor that causes a decrease in their quality of work and an increase in stress. Make sure that your clients are always striving towards a balanced workload that they are capable of handling.
- 2. Don't Make Promises You Can't Keep** - If clients make promises at work that they cannot keep, their employer may become unable to trust them. Encourage your clients to investigate all aspects of a project or situation before they make a commitment so they know that they can successfully keep the promises they make. You can also model this for your clients by not making promises to them that you can't keep.

3. **Identify Potential Obstacles** - Every project and situation has the potential for obstacles to arise unexpectedly. It is essential to examine and thoughtfully consider opportunities that may derail a plan. Once the obstacles have been identified, clients can factor them in when setting expectations for themselves.
4. **Create Room For Flexibility** - Make sure to leave some wiggle room with your clients, especially when it comes to deadlines during their work with your program. Giving them some leeway can prevent disappointment and greatly reduce stress. Clients should also learn to remain flexible with themselves and compassionate with themselves while they are in the workforce.

You may be wondering, “What’s wrong with setting high expectations?”

There is a difference between setting *high* expectations and setting *unrealistic* ones. When you expect little from your clients, you are likely to receive little effort and quality back. Setting high expectations is an important part of getting high-quality work, effort, and morale of your clients. However, when you continue to raise expectations to the point where they are deemed unrealistic, they may develop a “why bother?” attitude. They may feel that even if they put forth their full effort they still end up with the same outcome as they gave minimal effort. Communicate with your clients to ensure they are comfortable with the expectations set for them and that they learn how to develop realistic expectations for themselves.

To help develop the skill of setting reasonable expectations, using the **Realistic Goal Setting Reflection Questions** and the **Goal Setting Chart** (shown below) can be beneficial.

Realistic goal setting is an important skill for all of us but it is especially useful for those who have experienced trauma. Goal setting and then achieving these goals, no matter how small, is an opportunity to feel more in control of one’s life. Tracking goals is also a great way to help clients fight complacency and lack of motivation.

The printable worksheets are designed to help your clients continually strive for growth and development across several areas.

Please note that the ‘Within My Own Time Frame’ section is flexible and should be tailored to meet your client’s needs. For clients feeling overwhelmed or stuck, it may make sense to have it state ‘Within One Day.’ For other clients, those who seek to look further into the future, “Within One Year” or “Within Five years” may be more appropriate.

Realistic Goal Setting Reflection Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____

This goal is a relationship / health / education / career / personal goal.

Without thinking too much about how the words come out write down your goal:

By the end of 2 / 6 / 12 months OR my own time frame _____ from now I want to _____

Now, read over what you wrote and be more specific about the goal that you want to achieve:

By the end of 2 / 6 / 12 months OR my own time frame _____ from now I want to _____

Now, add a reason why you want to achieve this goal:

I want to achieve this goal because _____

Often, we have to make changes to achieve our goals.

To achieve this goal, I will have to make some changes Yes / No. If YES, I will have to make the

following changes _____

People are much more likely to be successful are achieving their goals if have the right support.

To achieve this goal, I will need some help from others Yes / No. If YES, I will have to get some help

from _____

Every action and step you take towards your goal counts, no matter how small a step.

What is one thing that you can do tomorrow to get one small step closer to achieving your goal:

Tomorrow I can do the following to get one step closer to my goal _____

What is one thing that you can accomplish this month to get closer to achieving your goal:

This month I can achieve the following to get closer to my goal _____

Any notes to yourself about this goal:

Revisit this goals sheet at the end of each month.

Goal Setting Chart

	Relationships	Education	Physical & Mental Health	Career
One Week				
One Month				
Six Months				
Within My Own Timeframe				