

Living your best life

It's hard to believe, but we are already in the second week of 2018.

Are you fired up for a new set of accomplishments in 2018 or are you feeling like you are stuck in a rut, living life in a bit of a holding pattern? Tonya Baker shares some strategies that could help you set your goals.

New Year may be the traditional time for resolutions, but right now is always a great time to reconnect with our goals and get proactive to set the direction and purpose for the rest of the year and beyond.

Whether you want to focus on health, finances, career, education or relationships, there will never be a better time for you to set your intentions, commit to action, recognise, and create the life you want. If not now then when, if not you then who?



Waimon Thant-Cyn

MDA member Waimon Thant-Cyn is no stranger to goal setting and achieving extraordinary things.

“Ever since I was old enough to string a sentence together, I have set many personal and professional goals for myself. Whilst I have achieved a lot of them, some have had to be

either changed or reprioritised, so goals are a continuous work in progress for me. When I was about five, my goal was to fly like a bird. When I fell flat on my face and cracked my chin open as I jumped off a veranda, I knew my goal of flying had to wait. For my 27th birthday, I jumped out of a perfectly good aeroplane and completed a tandem skydive. I managed to break my hip in the process but I *did* fly (or rather, fall with style).

“My road to success has not been without bumps and bruises. Living with spinal muscular atrophy presents its own challenges, without taking into account other aspects of life. Persistence can be tough when the going gets rough, but I wanted to succeed so much that I kept pushing forward despite facing many adversaries that

came my way. Every goal I wanted to achieve had its own trials and tribulations, and I could probably write an essay about each one of them.

“I grew up in a place called Burma, an impoverished country, and things were hard when I was young. When we moved to New Zealand, my parents struggled financially for a number of years as we tried to settle in. Ever since I was young, my goal has been to be financially free. I really wanted to succeed and would spend hours in the library reading books by successful people. I eventually figured out a pathway to success and at 16 I started planning ways to achieve my goals. I went to university and after graduating, I managed to get a good job in the field that would later propel me towards financial freedom. Less than a year later, I managed to pay off my student loan and work towards owning my first investment property. Since then, my property investment portfolio has grown each year. When I was making my ideal income before turning 30, I knew I was going to be ok.

Living on my own in my own house was something I didn't think was possible. One day, I was offered a really awesome job out of town, and despite my trembling nerves, I went ahead and flew away from my comfort zone. Of course, a lot of planning had to go into making that goal a reality, but in the end, here I am and I could not be happier.”

There is plenty we can learn from Waimon's story. Here are some strategies to help you decide what changes you want in your life and what you want to achieve.

How do I decide my goals?

It is critical to focus on the things that bring you joy; build your energy, your contribution and accomplishments.

These things come in spades when what you do aligns with your values and beliefs, so knowing who you are and having a healthy self-belief can get you looking in the right direction. What do you want to achieve in your lifetime? Who is the person you want to become? What contribution do you want to make to others? What do you want to be known for?

Where do I start?

The power of writing down your goals should not be underestimated. Being able to read it over and again, saying it aloud even, can help affirm your commitment and resolve as you work to achieve your goals.

It's often the people with firm written goals and the action plans to achieve them, who make things happen. Whereas people who have vague goals or none at all often watch things happen to them, or wonder where their life has gone!

Some people find creating a vision board of their goals, with pictures and quotes that represent their goals and inspire them, helps them to stay focused.

While dreaming big and giving yourself the opportunity to move from survival to success, it is important to break down some bite-size shorter-term goals, so that you have milestones along the way that you can celebrate, which will motivate you to further success.

Action plans should always be SMART:

Specific: A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general one. To set a specific goal answer the six "W" questions:

- Who: Who is involved?
- What: What do I want to accomplish?
- Where: Identify a location.
- When: Establish a time frame.
- Which: Identify requirements and constraints.
- Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

EXAMPLE: A general goal would be, "Get fit." A specific goal would say, "Join a gym and workout three days a week." General: "Buy a house." Specific: "Save a deposit to buy a home by March 2021, \$100 per week for next five years." General: "Live Healthy" Specific: "Remove sugar



Visualise the completed goal, see the new home, smell the leather seats in your new car, feel the cold hard cash in your hands.

from my diet and eat 5 fruit and vegetables everyday." You get the picture.

Measurable – Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the achievement of each goal you set.

When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as... How much? How many?

How will I know when it is accomplished?

Achievable – When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. You begin



seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

Realistic – To be realistic, a goal must be something you want to achieve and are able to work towards. A goal can be both lofty and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. However, be sure that every goal represents a chance for you to stretch and grow.

Time bound – A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it, there's no sense of urgency. If you want to lose five kilos, when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a timeframe, "by May 1st", then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal.

How do I stay on track?

Reviewing your goals will be crucial to your success. Make it a part of your routine. Each morning when you wake up, read your list of goals. Visualise the completed goal, see the new home, smell the leather seats in your new car, feel the cold hard cash in your hands. You could also repeat this process at night, right before you go to bed. These actions will start both your subconscious and conscious mind on working towards the goal. This will also begin to replace any of the negative self-talk you may have and replace it with positive self-talk.

Every time you make a decision during the day, ask yourself this question, "Does it take me closer to, or further

from my goal." If the answer is "closer to," then you've made the right decision. If the answer is "further from," well, you know what to do.

If you follow this process everyday, you will be on your way to achieving unlimited success in every aspect of your life.

How do I deal with challenges, setbacks and disappointments?

Let's be real. Everything in life is not always in our control and sometimes, even with the best intentions, we can sabotage our own success.

It is important to refocus and remind yourself of your strengths, your resilience, your problem solving abilities and your determination to succeed.

Remind yourself of times when you have overcome barriers and obstacles in the past. You have the ability to change your attitude, your circumstances, skill levels, knowledge base, mindset and daily focus.

Giving yourself a 'To Do' list can help get you back on track. If there is a hard task that is really causing you to procrastinate, put that on the top. Alternatively, you could focus on one small action step in the next 24 hours that will make a difference.

Choose a trusted friend, relative or mentor, someone who is a positive influence and advocate for you. Share your goals and challenges with them to get advice and support.

When you are passionate about your aspirations, you are more likely to achieve them, because you have more "whys" about achieving your goal than "why not" which will keep you motivated.

Waimon says, "I do have many more goals that I'd like to achieve. I live a goal-oriented life because having goals provide me with a meaningful purpose in life and pushes me to soldier on. Remember that no matter what, courage will prevail. Have the courage to dream big and work hard to achieve your goals. When you achieve your most desired goals, you will feel as if you're flying high up in the sky (without the need to jump out of a plane)."

Tonya Baker has recently achieved one of her goals after leaving a long-term career for the challenge of contracting. She is an MDA member and loves contributing to the organisation.