

# Parental FAQ

## Should I try to help my child set goals? If so, at what age is it appropriate to help my child to set goals?

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I think it's important for parents to help each of their children set and achieve goals. Setting goals encourages each child to work for something that is personally important. Reaching a goal helps your child feel good, enhancing the child's self-esteem. The attainment of goals also gives a child the confidence to set and reach future goals. Parents should be involved in praying with each of their children about the goals and in helping each child set the first goals to make sure they are realistic and attainable. Nothing can be more discouraging than failing to achieve your very first goals!

Parents can model the importance of setting goals by explaining to their children the different kinds of goals they have set for themselves.

One of my favorite memories of our children occurred when Chrissy was in kindergarten. One day she came home from school and announced that she didn't know how to jump rope very well. I was not sure what rope jumping had to do with reading, writing and math, but I tried to share her concern for the problem. Chrissy promptly retrieved a rope from the garage and began to practice. After a short amount of time, she asked me if I'd give her a nickel for every time she successfully jumped 20 in a row. (Now that I think about it, I was probably the one

who suggested this fully attainable goal!) By the end of the weekend, Chrissy was consistently jumping between 25 and 30 times in a row as she moved purposefully around the room or turned in a circle. It really surprised me to see a five-year-old so dedicated to attaining a goal.

Parents can model the importance of setting goals by explaining to their children the different kinds of goals they have set for themselves and by sharing their successes, setbacks, readjustments of the goal, etc. Over the years, I have counseled many children and teenagers who have no concept of the importance of setting and achieving goals. They were never taught this skill by their parents and somehow never picked it up along the way.

Throughout their childhood years, my children set various goals for themselves: the grades they wanted to achieve in school, the number of soccer goals they wanted to score and the money they needed to raise for a soccer trip to Hawaii, among others. When she was around 10, Chrissy decided to raise \$100 and take our family out for a nice dinner. Chrissy achieved that goal, and we all had a great time at the restaurant. Learning to set and achieve goals can make a difference in your child's life—today, tomorrow and in the future.

## A Challenge to You

1. Discuss some of your short-term and long-term goals with your spouse or a friend. Be sure to mention why the goals are important to you and what progress you are making with each one.
2. Share with your children examples of goals that you probably had when you were in grade school and what was involved in accomplishing them.
3. Discuss with your children possible goals they might set—something that they can accomplish in a week or two—and then assist them in achieving the goals.