

Goal Setting for Parents and Children this New Year

By Melissa M. Williams

Every year we wrestle around with our mind's new goal list, and for us visionaries, our first step to seeing the follow through all starts with writing it down. Saying and doing are entirely two different things. There is a reason for the phrase, "talk is cheap."

I find the goals that come into fruition are the ones I take time to write down, plan out and list predicted steps so I can see the bigger picture. It feels good to make a list, but it feels even better to cross things off that list.

When encouraging our children to have goals, as elementary as they might be, we are nurturing a stronger self-esteem for our youth. Children respond to being taken seriously, no matter how complex or simple the goal. It is odd to expect a child to suddenly turn into an adult and be required to know life skills that are either taught too late or never taught at all. Even if parental and teaching efforts aren't appreciated at the time, the foundation is still important. If a foundation is laid in those pivotal years the chances for a positive outcome down the road is much higher.

Sometimes we recognize our goals may seem too big and instead of *finishing* a project, it is more realistic to *start* that project as goal number one. When children see there are other goals to be met before the big goal is achieved, a healthy sense of reality sets in. For example, if a student's goal includes receiving all A's on their next report card, after making A's, and C's, one smaller goal might be to replace one hour of phone and texting "best friend", with an extra hour of after school doing math problems with, "best friend." Write it down. It's more tangible that way, and it becomes more serious. If your child wants to save up enough money to buy the next best video game, which I don't know too much about these days, one goal could be to replace one hour of TV with asking the neighbors and family for odd end jobs. I know when I was a kid and needed money and after doing every possible chore I could get my hands on, I got really creative and even went as far to draw pictures of my sister's favorite animals and sell those to her. She really liked penguins, and I was a very determined little girl.

I'll admit, I am guilty of setting huge goals while overlooking the smaller goals, assuming they will naturally get done. But by not acknowledging those small goals, we have set ourselves up to feel failure if the big goal wasn't to our standard. It is just as important to pat yourself on the back for small goals and through a party for the big ones!

This New Year, take your goal setting to a new level because you are important. Children's goals are important too, so let them learn and watch you write your goals down this year, which might spark an interest for them to do their own. When they

see you take your goals seriously, they will do the same for themselves. Each one of you can encourage each other and celebrate when the small goals are accomplished.