

Enrichment Associates



Consultation & Training

The Well Formed Outcome: The PROMISE Strategy

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A well formed outcome is essentially a goal, objective, desired change, or desired outcome formulated to facilitate a high likelihood of success. A well formed outcome directs your attention productively toward your desired outcome, what you want to accomplish. A goal, objective, desired change, or desired outcome needs to satisfy certain conditions to be “well formed.” A well formed outcome defines and reflects your commitment to change.

Different authors and practitioners define the components of a well formed outcome somewhat differently, but the central premise is that you can't get somewhere if you don't know where you are going. Further, the clearer (the more well formed) the desired outcome the more likely the desired outcome will be achieved. The term, “well formed outcome,” was coined early in the development of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). Having a well formed outcome is typically considered a prerequisite to other change interventions. A well formed outcome is a central concept in goal setting, solution focused therapy, coaching, and just about any area where change and improvement are sought.

PROMISE Strategy:

PROMISE is our acronym for the conditions of a well formed outcome. We have found extremely useful in our work with clients to help them achieve their desired outcomes and live life more effectively. The acronym PROMISE is also meant to be a reminder that a well formed outcome is a commitment to change, a promise made to yourself to do what is effective to achieve your desired outcome. Having “promise” also implies the potential for future accomplishment and excellence.

Most importantly, though, PROMISE is a strategy that sets the foundation for behavioral change and realization of desired outcomes; the goals and objectives we are striving toward to have a more satisfying and successful life.

The components of the PROMISE strategy or pattern are outlined below. To complete the PROMISE pattern each component needs to be clearly specified, though not necessarily in any particular order. As one piece is completed, others may need adjustment. But when finished, you will have your desired outcome, what you want, formulated in a manner that substantially increases your likelihood of success.



P Positively stated: Desired outcomes should be stated in positive and specific terms. This is statement of what you want, not what you don't want. Positive language is much more powerful in making changes and achieving what we want. Positive language is proactive; you are striving toward something; rather than away from something.

R Represented in sensory based terms: The goal or desired outcome should be clearly imagined with full sensory based representations. Vague or unclear goals are do not get you there. You want to know in your mind's eye what you will see, hear, and feel when the desired outcome is achieved. The desired outcome needs to be clear and defined by what you will experience when you have achieved it. This is the subjective knowledge of the experience of achieving the outcome. This helps propel you toward it.

O Objectify the desired outcome: This takes the sensory based representation further and elaborates upon it. What are the objective indications that your goal has been achieved? What will you specifically be doing behaviorally that will be evidence that the outcome has been achieved? What objective or measurable evidence will be present when the outcome has been achieved? O is interactive with R and they need to be considered together for the clearest and most powerful well formed outcome.

M Motivational clarity. A well formed outcome is most powerful when it is motivationally inspiring. Motivation is the energy driving movement toward accomplishment of the desired outcome. Motivation needs to be clear and unequivocal or the movement toward the desired outcome loses potency. Specification of P, R, and O help set the stage for careful consideration of the various aspects of motivation clarity. Questions to consider include: What are the reasons the desired outcome important to me? Am I passionate about achieving the outcome? Are there concerns I need to address before I can be optimally motivated to achieve the desired outcome? Often there are concerns, fears, or issues that need to be resolved for motivational clarity. This will be addressed more in considering Ecology, below.

I Identify resources. People have, or potentially have, the internal resources they need to make the changes they desire and achieve their desired outcome. The task here is to identify the resources you have that will facilitate achievement of your desired outcome. These might include personal qualities like confidence, competency, commitment, flexibility, or passion. It may also involve identification of external resources.

S Self-initiated and self-maintained. A well formed outcome or goal involves what you do, not what others do. While your behavior may impact others, you cannot change others. You can change yourself. Moving toward an outcome is a self-initiated process; no one else can do it for you. It is also up to you to maintain your movement toward the desired outcome and maintain the changes that you make. A well formed outcome places you in the driver's seat, you control the process.

E Ecology Check. Checking ecology involves considering the consequences of the desired change. When the desired outcome is achieved what will be the impact on my internal and external world? Will there be consequences in your external world? For instance, how will the

change impact my relationships with family, coworkers and others in my life? Also, what will the consequences be for me? For instance, will achieving my goal impact my emotional well being, self-esteem and comfort? If the desired outcome means giving up a habit, do I have other ways to fill the needs that habit currently fulfills? It is often the unforeseen and unconsidered consequences of change that sabotage our efforts. The goal of the ecology check is to anticipate these potential problems so they can be addressed in designing your plan.

Addressing and anticipating ecology issues also facilitates motivational clarity. It does this in two ways. First, by removing potential impediments to our clear and unequivocal commitment to the desired outcome, change, or goal motivation is clarified. Second, the ecology check is also a reality check to be sure the change is what you really want. Being certain of this affirms and supports our motivation.

Concluding comments:

The PROMISE strategy is a method for formulating a desired outcome in a manner that makes success more likely. In addition to being sure what you want is clear, you examine what you need to achieve it and the consequences of achieving it. With those components satisfactorily defined it is easier to make a plan and set out the steps to go for it. The effort placed in developing a well formed outcome pays off by facilitating successful change and accomplishment. The PROMISE strategy sets the foundation for behavioral change and realization of desired outcomes.

If you have questions or comments, we would love to hear from you.

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