



UNITED STATES *Dressage* FEDERATION

Using Goals to Improve Training

Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson Objectives:

- Analyze three goal setting theories for usefulness in dressage.
- Adapt personal goals utilizing three goal setting theories.
- Assess importance of goal setting vs. behavior control for training improvement.

Read pages 2-3. Outline what task and outcome goals are then fill in a goal that you have for yourself.

Task Goals:

Outcome Goals:

My Goal:

Motivation: What Drives You to Ride?

SEANA ADAMSON

Motivation is an elusive and slippery concept. What is it? Where do you find it? And how do you keep it day after day, year after year? There are many factors that impact our feelings of motivation. Over-training, under-training, lack of direction or the need for variety can all impact our daily inspiration. In the first of this series of articles on motivation, we will examine two of motivation's most basic influences: drive and ambition.

Drive versus Ambition

Drive is an internal desire resulting from a deep love for what you are

doing. If you are motivated by drive you have a love and appreciation for the sport and art of dressage. This love will sustain you during the hard times and provide you with the tenacity and patience required to survive the inevitable difficulties and setbacks that are experienced by every horse and rider.

Ambition is a desire to do well *compared to others*. When we are motivated by ambition, it is the external evaluation of our performance that becomes most important. Did you win or lose? Have you finally made it to Prix St. Georges, or are you still struggling with Third Level? Ambition wants to know how you stack up next to your best

competitors. This is not to imply that ambition is bad, in fact for most top dressage riders it is important to have a healthy balance between drive and ambition. However, ambition without the necessary drive to train through good and bad times, leads to nothing but unrealized dreams.

Task Goals versus Outcome Goals

To better understand how drive and ambition effect motivation we can look at two different types of goals: task goals versus outcome goals. When you have a powerful internal drive, motivation will tend to be increased by focusing on *task goals or learning oriented goals*. These types of goals emphasize learning and mastery for the joy of the task, not for outward approval. Task oriented learners get "lost in their work," and are not overly concerned with how they measure up to others. This makes them less fearful of failure and more willing to take risks. After all, why be afraid of failure when it's only part of the process of learning to do something you love.

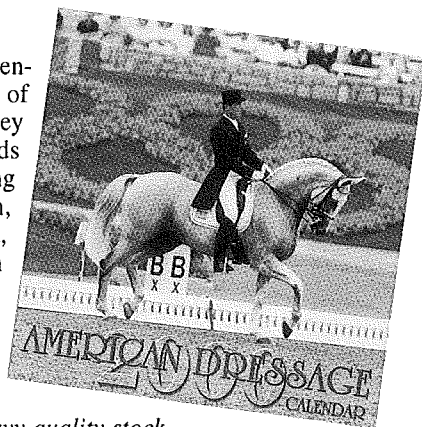
The danger of excessive ambition is preoccupation with a different type of goal, that is the ego or outcome oriented goal. *Outcome* orientation, or the *ego-involved* learner, is concerned with gaining approval from others. They are less concerned with mastering the task, and more concerned with others seeing them as successful. This desire for approval backfires as the need for success leads to fear of failure and decreased risk taking. The excessive focus on "winning" distracts the rider from focusing on the task at hand and leads to more mistakes, tension and frustration.

However, the outcome of our efforts is important. In fact, research suggests that most top athletes have a mixture of both learning and outcome orienta-

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tion. Balance is the key, as it is with so many aspects of riding (and life).

Balancing Drive and Ambition

Non-competitive riders may be motivated purely by their love for dressage. There are great rewards to be found in the relationship with your horse. Can you think of any person in your life with which you spend an hour each day in intense non-verbal communication? The intensity of the relationship between dressage horse and rider, especially one that has been sustained for many years, can result in a depth of communication deeper than anything you may ever experience with another human. This is immensely rewarding.

For competitive dressage riders, ambition plays a helpful and important role. Imagine a car with a motor and a steering wheel. Drive (task orientation) is the motor of the car, while ambition (outcome orientation) is the steering wheel. Drive is responsible for 95% of getting where you are going, yet without a steering wheel you may be going in the wrong direction. Healthy ambition steers you towards your desired destination. Ambition can also be called "outcome orientation", while drive can be called "task orientation." In competition it is important to focus on your test, the task, rather than the outcome. The competition's outcome is ultimately out of your control and worrying about it will only distract you from riding your best. You can only control how you ride your test, the outcome will take care of itself. Ambition forces you to be judged and to compare yourself to others. This is constructive if you use these comparisons to help yourself learn, refine a technique or adjust an aspect of your training that has gone astray. Ambition is destructive if it distracts you from your task, leads you to be critical of others, disdainful of judges or jealous of another's success.

Non-competitive dressage riders may find that adding a little healthy ambition can take their riding to a higher level. Competing can be very helpful in many ways. It provides specific, short-term goals, with a deadline, that can identify weaknesses in subtle details that may otherwise go unnoticed. Can you ride a smooth trot to canter transition every time you ask, or do you need an extra circle to prepare? Can you make a downward transition exactly at the letter? Presenting a test to a judge will force you to address the details of correct riding. In addition,

feedback from the judge can help motivate you by providing a clear picture of where you are versus where you want to be. It is important to not overrate the importance of any one test, or any one judge's opinion, but when the same comment ("needs self-carriage") appears on several tests, from several different judges, you know the information is good.

Next month we will take a closer look at different types of goals and how they may help or hinder you. As with all aspects of dressage, balance is the key. Motivate yourself by balancing your

drive with healthy ambition. A lifetime of joyful learning awaits you! ☺



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SMARTER Goals

- **Specific**

- Answers five questions:

-

-

-

-

-

- **Measurable**

- A measurable goal needs to have very specific criteria for measuring

- _____.

- How much?

- How many?

- How will I know when I've met my goal?

- **Attainable**

- Goals must be realistic and obtainable. Begin by identifying the goals that are the most important to you. Then assess whether they are within reach. Choosing goals that are too difficult can lead to _____ while choosing a goal that is too easily met might feel meaningless. Find a happy medium.

- **Relevant**

- This item is all about choosing a goal that matters. Think of something that will _____ you forward in your training.
 - Why is this important?
 - What will I gain by reaching this goal?

- **Time**

- You'll need to set up a time frame for the goal. _____ can help to drive training but also help to keep you focused. Goals do not always have to be long term goals. Choosing "today" as a timeframe is valid as long as you meet the other criteria.

- **Evaluate**

- Once you have created your goal you'll need to evaluate your progress. These can be written or just a quick analysis if your goal is for a single training session. Writing down a progress report related to your goal can help you keep track over time.
 - Where am I today/What can I do today?
 - Where was I yesterday?

- **Revise**

- You need to be able to adapt as challenges or successes arise. If through your evaluation you find that things are too easy or difficult you can modify them at any time. Revise until you are sure that you can find a way to meet it and the goal still fulfills all of the other requirements.

Locke and Latham

- 1. Clarity:** Clear goals help you to know exactly what you are working to achieve.
- 2. Challenge:** A goal should be challenging enough that you will need to develop self-discipline and persistence to work through problems that arise.
- 3. Commitment:** What keeps a person committed can vary; find something that works for you.
- 4. Feedback:**
 - Feedback can come from 2 sources:
 - Yourself
 - Another person
- 5. Task Complexity:** Choosing a goal with too little complexity won't be enough of a challenge to keep you committed.

Why goal setting doesn't work

Ray Williams is the author of *Eye of the Storm: How Mindful Leaders Transform Chaotic Workplaces, Breaking Bad Habits, and The Leadership Edge*.

Posted Apr 11, 2011, Psychology Today

Despite the popularity of goal setting, there is compelling evidence that regardless of good intentions and effort, people and organizations consistently fall short of achieving their goals. More often than not, the fault is attributed to the goal setter. But the real problem may be in the efficacy of goal setting itself.

The Center For Disease Control estimates that 34% of Americans are overweight and a further 34% are obese, which means almost 70% of the population are dangerously unhealthy. A curious result, despite the proliferation of weight loss programs that usually focus on weight-loss goals. The easy explanation would be to attribute fault to lack of will or effort. But the problem may be inherent in the validity of goal setting.

In the early 2000's, General Motors had set a goal to capture 29% of the American auto market. They even produced corporate pins for people to wear with the number 29 on them. Needless to say they never achieved that goal, and without a government bailout, may not have even survived.

Our society, at both the individual level and in organizations, has an obsession with goal setting, particularly "stretch" goals or "audacious goals." We tie goals to accomplishment. In our culture, an individual or organizations cannot be considered successful unless goals are achieved. And the usual motivation method used by leaders to achieve these goals is the continual focus on "improvement," "bigger and better," through harder and harder work, and increased productivity. And the way to measure that success is to measure goal attainment. Thus self-help gurus such as Stephen Covey, Tony Robbins, Brian Tracy and others emphasized the necessary link between goals and success.

In my article in the Financial Post, I said, "The inherent problem with goal setting is related to how the brain works. Recent neuroscience research shows the brain works in a protective way, resistant to change. Therefore, any goals that require substantial behavioral change or thinking-pattern change will automatically be resisted. The brain is wired to seek rewards and avoid pain or discomfort, including fear. When fear of failure creeps into the mind of the goal setter it commences a de-motivator with a desire to return to known, comfortable behavior and thought patterns."

Adam Galinsky, a professor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management and one of the authors of a Harvard Business School report called *Goals Gone Wild*," argues that "goal setting has been treated like an over-the-counter medication when it should really be treated with more care, as a prescription-strength medication." He argues that goal setting can focus attention too much on the wrong things and can lead people to participate in extreme behaviors to achieve the goals.

There is an addiction in our culture to "getting more," the "going for the goals" hype is disconnected from peoples' authentic selves, and their values.

Finally, there are psychological manifestations of not achieving goals that may be more damaging than not having any goals at all. The process sets up desires that are removed from everyday reality. Whenever we desire things that we don't have, we set our brain's nervous system to produce negative emotions. Second, highly aspirational goals require us to develop new competencies, some of which may be beyond current capabilities. As we develop these competencies, we are likely to experience failures, which then become de-motivational. Thirdly, goal setting sets up an either-or polarity of success. The only true measure can either be 100% attainment or perfection, or 99% and less, which is failure. We can then excessively focus on the missing or incomplete part of our efforts, ignoring the successful parts. Fourthly, goal setting doesn't take into account random forces of chance. You can't control all the environmental variables to guarantee 100% success.

Mindfulness has gathered the attention of brain researchers, coaches, psychologists and medical practitioners recently. A fundamental concept in mindfulness, is focusing on being in the moment, the present. This presents an interesting problem for the goal setter, where the focus is on the future. How can you be focusing on the present and also be thinking about the future?

The other problem is that goals are often cast in the image of the ideal or perfection, which activates the self-judging thinking of "I should be this way." This counteracts the positive need for self-acceptance.

And if the goal is not attained, we can often engage in thinking we are failures, not good enough, not smart enough, not beautiful enough, etc. So the unattainment of goals can create emotions of unworthiness.

We must also make a distinction between our intentions vs. goals. An intention is a direction we want to pursue, preferably with passion. My experience is that people are often confused, and unclear about the intentions of how they want to live and achieve, and therefore a focus on goals doesn't assist them with clarifying their intentions.

When I work with people as their coach and mentor, they often tell me they've set goals such as "I want to be wealthy," or "I want to be more beautiful/popular," "I want a better relationship/ideal partner." They don't realize they've just described the symptoms or outcomes of the problems in their life. The cause of the problem, that many resist facing, is themselves. They don't realize that for a change to occur, if one is desirable, they must change themselves. Once they make the personal changes, everything around them can alter, which may make the goal irrelevant.

There's an old saying: "you don't get what you want in life, you get in life what you are."

The Problem with Goals:

What has been your experience with goals in the past?

Intention: a determination to act in a certain way

Goals are focused on the future. Intentions are in the present moment.

Goals are a destination or specific achievement. Intentions are lived each day, independent of reaching the goal or destination.

Goals are external achievements. Intentions are your inner-relationships with yourself and others.

Goals require a result that is measured against the goal to determine if you were successful or not. Intentions do not require a result.

What matters most to you?

What would you like to build, create, or nurture in your life?

What would you like to let go of?

How do you feel when you are your happiest self?

What makes you proud?

What fears would you like to release?

My Revised Goal and/or Intention:

If you want to achieve your goals, don't focus on them.

TEDx Video with Reggie Rivers

What can I do today?

What can I do tomorrow?

What can I do this week?