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Bridge4Mothers

2025-1-DE02-KA210-VET-000359232

PSL Programme — Personal, Social and Learning-to-Learn Competences

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Motivation & Goal-Setting Guide

Introduction

Goals give direction to learning, work and personal development. They help people identify what they want to achieve, organise their efforts and recognise progress over time.

Motivation is the energy that encourages us to begin, continue and complete an activity. It can change from day to day, especially when tasks feel difficult, progress is slow or unexpected challenges arise. For this reason, effective goal-setting should not depend only on feeling motivated. It should also include realistic planning, positive habits, self-confidence and regular reflection.

This guide provides practical strategies to help participants:

- identify personal strengths and achievements;
- build confidence;
- develop a positive approach to learning;
- create realistic and meaningful goals;
- use the SMART goal-setting method;
- plan practical actions;
- manage setbacks;
- recognise and celebrate progress.

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1. Building Confidence and Motivation

Confidence grows when people recognise their abilities, take manageable steps and learn from experience.

It does not mean believing that everything will be easy. It means trusting that you can improve, ask for help and continue trying.

Recognise Your Strengths

Everyone has strengths, skills and positive qualities that can support personal development.

These may include:

- creativity;
- patience;
- determination;
- communication skills;
- organisation;
- reliability;
- curiosity;
- teamwork;

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- problem-solving;
- willingness to learn;
- ability to support others;
- flexibility.

Complete the following statements:

- One strength I have is…
- Something I am proud of is…
- A challenge I managed successfully was…
- A skill I have developed is…
- A quality that other people appreciate in me is…

Recognising your strengths can help you approach new goals with greater confidence.

Remember Previous Achievements

Achievements do not need to be large or public.

Examples may include:

- completing a course;
- learning a new skill;

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- asking for support;
- improving your communication;
- attending an activity regularly;
- managing a difficult situation;
- completing a task you had delayed;
- helping another person;
- continuing after a setback.

Think about a previous achievement.

Ask yourself:

- What did I achieve?
- What actions helped me?
- Which strengths did I use?
- Who supported me?
- What did I learn from the experience?
- How can I use this experience in a new situation?

Understand Your Motivation

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People are motivated by different things.

Motivation may come from:

- learning something useful;
- improving career opportunities;
- becoming more independent;
- helping family or community members;
- feeling proud of personal progress;
- developing confidence;
- meeting new people;
- improving health or well-being;
- creating positive change.

Ask yourself:

- Why is this goal important to me?
- What difference could it make?
- How will I feel when I make progress?
- Who else may benefit?

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- Is this goal based on my own priorities?

A goal is often easier to maintain when it has clear personal meaning.

Use Positive Self-Talk

Negative thoughts can reduce confidence and motivation.

Instead of:

- “I cannot do this.”
- “I always give up.”
- “I am not good at learning.”
- “It is too late for me.”
- “I will probably fail.”

Try:

- “I can start with one small step.”
- “I have learned difficult things before.”
- “I can improve through practice.”
- “It is normal to make mistakes.”
- “I may need support, and that is acceptable.”

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- “Progress is more important than perfection.”
- “I do not know how to do this yet.”

Positive self-talk should be realistic and supportive. It helps you focus on possibilities rather than limitations.

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2. Developing a Positive Mindset

A positive mindset does not mean ignoring difficulties. It means approaching challenges with openness, patience and a willingness to learn.

Use a Growth Mindset

A growth mindset is the belief that skills and abilities can develop through learning, practice, feedback and effort.

A fixed mindset may say:

- “I am either good at this or I am not.”
- “Mistakes show that I cannot do it.”
- “Other people are more talented.”
- “If it is difficult, I should stop.”

A growth mindset may say:

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- “I can improve with practice.”
- “Mistakes help me identify what to learn.”
- “Everyone develops at a different pace.”
- “Challenges can help me grow.”
- “Feedback can support improvement.”

Add the Word “Yet”

The word “yet” can turn a negative statement into a learning opportunity.

Instead of:

“I cannot use this technology.”

Try:

“I cannot use this technology yet.”

Instead of:

“I do not understand this topic.”

Try:

“I do not understand this topic yet, but I can ask for guidance.”

Reframe Difficult Situations

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Reframing means looking at a situation from a more constructive perspective.

Example:

Negative thought:
“I made a mistake during the presentation.”

Constructive thought:
“I learned which parts I need to practise before the next presentation.”

Another example:

Negative thought:
“I did not complete everything I planned.”

Constructive thought:
“I completed part of the plan and can adjust the remaining steps.”

Focus on What You Can Control

You may not control every situation, but you can often control:

- your effort;
- your preparation;
- your response;
- the support you request;
- how you organise your time;

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- whether you try again;
- how you reflect on the experience.

Directing attention towards controllable actions can increase confidence and reduce frustration.

Positive Mindset Exercise

Think of a current challenge and complete the statements:

The challenge I am facing is:

One thing I can control is:

One thing I can learn is:

One person who could support me is:

One positive step I can take is:

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3. Setting SMART Goals

A clear goal makes it easier to decide what actions to take.

The SMART method helps turn a general idea into a practical and realistic goal.

SMART means:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Relevant**
- **Time-bound**

Specific

A specific goal clearly explains what you want to achieve.

General goal:

“I want to improve my digital skills.”

Specific goal:

“I want to learn how to create and send professional emails with attachments.”

Ask:

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- What exactly do I want to achieve?
- Which skill or result am I focusing on?
- Who is involved?
- Where will the activity take place?

Measurable

A measurable goal includes a way to recognise progress.

Example:

“I will complete three online digital skills lessons.”

Ask:

- How many?
- How often?
- How will I know I have completed the goal?
- What evidence will show progress?

Achievable

An achievable goal should be realistic considering your time, experience, responsibilities and available support.

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Example:

“I will complete one lesson each week for three weeks.”

Ask:

- Do I have enough time?
- What resources do I need?
- Do I need training or support?
- Can I divide the goal into smaller steps?

A goal can still be challenging, but it should not be impossible.

Relevant

A relevant goal should connect with your needs, interests or future plans.

Ask:

- Why is this goal important?
- How does it support my development?
- Does it connect with my learning, work or personal priorities?
- Am I choosing this goal for myself?

Time-Bound

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A time-bound goal includes a deadline or review date.

Example:

“I will complete three digital skills lessons by the end of this month.”

Ask:

- When will I begin?
- When will I complete the goal?
- When will I review my progress?

Complete SMART Goal Example

General goal:

“I want to become more confident in public speaking.”

SMART goal:

“Over the next six weeks, I will prepare and deliver three short presentations of five minutes each to a small group. After every presentation, I will ask for one piece of feedback and record one improvement for the next session.”

This goal is:

- specific because it focuses on short presentations;
- measurable because it includes three presentations;

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- achievable because it begins with a small group;
- relevant because it develops communication confidence;
- time-bound because it will be completed within six weeks.

Additional SMART Goal Examples

Learning Goal

“By the end of the next four weeks, I will complete two online lessons each week to improve my spreadsheet skills.”

Employment Goal

“Within the next month, I will update my CV, ask one person to review it and apply for at least three suitable job opportunities.”

Communication Goal

“For the next two weeks, I will practise active listening in one conversation each day by avoiding interruptions and summarising the other person’s main point.”

Well-Being Goal

“For the next month, I will take a 20-minute walk at least three times per week and record each walk in my calendar.”

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4. Turning Goals into Action

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A goal becomes more manageable when it is divided into smaller actions.

Break the Goal into Steps

Example goal:

“I want to complete a training course.”

Possible steps:

1. Find suitable courses.
2. Compare content, cost and schedule.
3. Select one course.
4. Register.
5. Add lesson dates to a calendar.
6. Complete one lesson at a time.
7. Ask for help when needed.
8. Review learning after each section.
9. Complete the final activity.
10. Record the achievement.

Identify Resources and Support

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Consider what you may need.

Resources can include:

- time;
- information;
- training materials;
- internet access;
- transport;
- equipment;
- financial support;
- feedback;
- encouragement;
- professional guidance.

Support may come from:

- family members;
- friends;
- colleagues;

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- trainers;
- teachers;
- mentors;
- career advisers;
- community organisations.

Asking for support is part of effective planning.

Create a Simple Action Plan

Use the following structure:

My goal:
What do I want to achieve?

My reason:
Why is this important?

My actions:
What specific steps will I take?

My support:
Who or what can help me?

My deadline:
When will I complete the goal?

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My progress check:
How will I know I am moving forward?

Plan for Possible Challenges

Thinking about challenges in advance can help you prepare.

Ask:

- What may make this goal difficult?
- What could reduce my motivation?
- What responsibilities may affect my time?
- What will I do if I miss a planned action?
- Who can help me if I feel stuck?

Example:

Possible challenge:
“I may feel tired after work.”

Possible response:
“I will study for 20 minutes in the morning twice per week instead of planning long evening sessions.”

Use Small and Regular Actions

Small actions are often easier to maintain than large changes.

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Instead of:

“I will study for five hours every Saturday.”

Try:

“I will study for 30 minutes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.”

Consistency can be more effective than occasional intense effort.

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5. Maintaining Motivation

Motivation may increase and decrease over time. This is normal.

You can support motivation by creating routines and regularly reconnecting with the reason behind your goal.

Make Progress Visible

Record completed actions using:

- a calendar;
- a checklist;
- a notebook;
- a progress chart;

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- a mobile application;
- weekly reflection notes.

Seeing progress can increase motivation.

Use Reminders

Helpful reminders may include:

- calendar alerts;
- written notes;
- visual goal boards;
- scheduled study times;
- messages from a supportive person;
- keeping materials in a visible place.

Connect Actions with Existing Habits

Link a new action to something you already do.

Examples:

- “After breakfast, I will review my daily goal.”
- “After work on Tuesday, I will complete one lesson.”

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- “Before checking social media, I will spend ten minutes practising.”
- “At the end of each week, I will review my progress.”

Focus on the Next Step

Thinking about the entire goal may sometimes feel overwhelming.

Ask:

“What is the smallest useful action I can take today?”

The answer may be:

- opening the document;
- writing one sentence;
- making one phone call;
- completing one exercise;
- asking one question;
- arranging one meeting;
- spending ten minutes researching.

Starting often reduces resistance.

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6. Managing Setbacks

Setbacks are a normal part of progress.

Missing a deadline, losing motivation or making a mistake does not mean the goal should be abandoned.

Respond Constructively

Instead of:

“I failed, so there is no point continuing.”

Try:

“My original plan did not work. I need to understand why and adjust it.”

Ask:

- What happened?
- Was the goal realistic?
- Was the action too large?
- Did I have enough information or support?
- Did unexpected responsibilities arise?
- What can I change?

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- What is the next manageable step?

Adjust the Plan

You may need to:

- extend the deadline;
- reduce the size of the goal;
- divide one action into smaller steps;
- change the time or location;
- ask for help;
- use a different learning method;
- take a short break and restart.

Changing the plan is not the same as giving up.

Learn from Mistakes

Mistakes can provide useful information.

Complete the following statements:

- One thing that did not work was…
- One reason may have been…

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- One thing I learned was…
- Next time I will…
- The support I need is…

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7. Recognising and Celebrating Progress

Progress should be recognised throughout the process, not only at the end.

Notice Small Achievements

Progress may include:

- beginning the task;
- completing one step;
- attending regularly;
- practising a difficult skill;
- asking for feedback;
- becoming more organised;
- recovering after a setback;
- feeling more confident;

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- helping another participant;
- improving compared with the previous attempt.

Celebrate Appropriately

Positive ways to celebrate may include:

- sharing the achievement with someone;
- recording it in a journal;
- taking a break;
- doing an enjoyable activity;
- displaying a certificate;
- rewarding yourself with something meaningful;
- reflecting on how far you have come.

Celebrating progress strengthens motivation and helps create positive learning habits.

Compare Progress with Your Starting Point

Avoid comparing your progress only with other people.

Ask:

- What can I do now that I could not do before?

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- What feels easier?
- What have I learned?
- How has my confidence changed?
- Which habits have improved?
- What am I proud of?

Personal Development Plan

My Strengths

Three strengths I can use are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My Achievement

An achievement I am proud of is:

The qualities that helped me achieve it were:

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My SMART Goal

My specific goal is:

I will measure it by:

This goal is achievable because:

It is relevant to me because:

I aim to complete it by:

My Action Steps

My first step is:

My second step is:

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My third step is:

Support and Resources

The support or resources I need are:

The person who may support me is:

Possible Challenge

A challenge I may face is:

I will respond by:

Progress Review

I will review my progress on:

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One way I will celebrate progress is:

Final Reminder

Meaningful progress usually begins with a small and realistic step.

Remember to:

- recognise your strengths;
- choose goals that matter to you;
- make goals specific and realistic;
- break large goals into smaller actions;
- use supportive self-talk;
- ask for help when needed;
- learn from difficulties;
- adjust your plan when necessary;
- recognise and celebrate progress.

Success is not only reaching the final goal. It is also the confidence, knowledge, skills and positive habits developed along the way.

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