



Setting Long-Term Goals—Purpose Challenge, Activity 8

Overview: Students write about how they can make their long-term goals a reality.

“Eyes forward. Mind focused. Heart ready. Game on, World.” —Akshita Prakash

When You Might Use This Practice:

- When students have completed the seven activities in the Discover Your Purpose Practice Collection
- To help students develop content for college entrance essays. Visit www.purposechallenge.org for more information.

Time Required: 30 minutes

Level:

- Middle School
- High School
- College

Learning Objective:

Students will:

- Write a reflection on what it will take for them to reach their long-term goals

Materials:

- Setting Long-Term Goals Handout
- Writing materials

SEL Competencies:

- Self-Awareness
 - Responsible Decision-Making
-

How to Do It:

Reflection before the practice:

- Reflect on a long-term goal you have set for yourself. What are you doing now to reach that goal? What obstacles might you encounter along the way? What do you need to reach your goal?

Instructions:

Before you begin:

1. This practice is to be completed after the students have finished all seven of the previous practices in the Discover Your Purpose Practice Collection.
 2. Students can do the entire series of practices online for free at www.purposechallenge.org. Have them click on “Toolkit” and then register for an account. When they finish the practices, they will receive a digital record of their written answers for each exercise in addition to instructions on how to take these answers and turn them into a college entrance essay.
- Tell students:
 - *Over the past few days/weeks, you’ve been encouraged to reflect on the things that matter most to you, your far-horizon goals, and how you want to make your mark on the world.*
 - *This last activity is designed to bring it all together as you think about the more immediate steps you need to take to make progress toward your most personally meaningful, long-term aims.*
 - *Earlier, you were asked to imagine your life at 40 years of age, assuming that things had gone as well as they possibly could have. Think back to that activity. [Have students refer to their completed Best Possible Self handout, if possible.]*
 - *What long-term goals did you highlight? What steps could you imagine taking to make that long-term vision a reality?*
 - Give each student a Setting Long-Term Goals handout.
 - When students have finished, give students the opportunity to share their answers with each other or with the whole class, if they feel comfortable doing so.
 - Closure: Ask students to reflect on whether this exercise confirmed their sense of purpose or, if they aren’t sure of their purpose, did it give them any clues or insight into what their purpose might be?

Reflection After the Practice:

- How did students respond to this practice? Did they find it helpful in helping them decide what their purpose might be?

The Research Behind the Practice:

Studies find that pursuing one’s purpose is associated with psychological well-being. For example, compared to others, [people with purpose](#) report they are happier, more satisfied with their lives, and more hopeful about the future.

For teens, purpose is related to indicators of academic success, such as [grit](#), [resilience](#), and a belief that one’s work is [feasible and manageable](#).

Why does this matter? In spite of the benefits, only about [20% of adolescents](#) lead lives of purpose. Granted, the developmental task of teenagers is to discover who they are (identity) and what they want to accomplish that benefits the world (purpose); however, students who have a sense of purpose or are actively looking for one are propelled by a personally meaningful and highly motivating aim—they know what they hope to achieve and how academics can help. Hence, they are more likely to work hard and excel in school.

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Hill, P. L., Burrow, A. L., & Bronk, K. C. (2016). Persevering with positivity and purpose: An examination of purpose commitment and positive affect as predictors of grit. *Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being, 17*(1), 257-269.

Pizzolato, J. E., Brown, E. L., & Kanny, M. A. (2011). Purpose plus: Supporting youth purpose, control, and academic achievement. *New Directions for Youth Development, 2011*(132), 75-88.

Source:

The Purpose Challenge Toolkit was created by [Dr. Kendall Cotton-Bronk](#) in partnership with the Greater Good Science Center and [Prosocial](#). For more information, visit www.purposechallenge.org