

Setting Goals for 2006

It doesn't seem possible that the holidays have passed, and it already is time to decide what you want to accomplish in 2006. There are lots of questions for you to consider, such as how many new patients you want to serve, how much you want to earn, and how much time you want to spend with your family. To answer these questions, you must create and write out your goals. The word this year is "intentions," which is synonymous with "goals." So, what are your intentions? Where do you want to be by the end of 2006?

In this article, we'll discuss both personal and professional goals. We all seem to have the same issues of a) not knowing what we want and b) not having the time to write out our ideas and wishes. I encourage you to take the time to complete this task. There are at least seven areas for personal goals. I'm going to discuss them briefly, and add my own ideas about goals for the AOM profession.

First, let's talk about family goals. How much time do you want to spend with your family throughout this coming year? We all received cards during the holidays that wished us happiness and warm greetings. Let's take this message to heart, and really enjoy the time we spend with our families. Do you want weekly family time or monthly family time? Do you want a family vacation? If so, where? Do you want special outings with family members? Do you want to improve a relationship with a particular family member?

Next are financial goals, which evolve around "green *qi*." In my practice management classes I always ask, "What does money mean to you?" Most students answer that they don't have enough money, and that they are tired of being broke. Worrying about money has a pervading effect on you and your ability to deliver a solid, balanced treatment. You must decide on your level of comfort with money, particularly the amounts you want to have in the bank and in other savings. This is the year to set those goals.

Third - educational goals. This is the year to study your patients and their needs in order to increase your knowledge. Many universities have programs or classes titled "Lifelong Learning." Lifelong learning should be a goal for every one of us; we should constantly be listening and learning for the benefit of ourselves, our families and our patients.

Fourth are work goals. This may include increasing the number of patients you want to see in a week; increasing or decreasing the number of hours you work; or painting, redecorating, or otherwise improving your office. Remember that patients like to go to places that are clean and up-to-date. This may even be the year to change locations or get your own office.

Fifth are health goals. This includes improving your health and vitality, and taking care of yourself. Working in the Oriental medicine profession takes courage and strength. After seeing patients all day, your *qi* will need to be recharged. You must stay at optimum health in order to care for your patients.

Sixth are spiritual goals, which are a reflection of your life from the inside out. You must take care of your inner self on a daily basis. Whether it is attending church, a temple, or another institution of your choice, it is an important part of one's spiritual life. Whether you meditate, spend quiet time alone or just relax, these techniques will help you recharge and support your spirit. Take the time to care of yourself spiritually.

Seventh are social goals. This could mean getting together with friends or joining a service club, such as the Lions Club. It might mean having friends over for an evening of food and games. Maybe you have enough money to go to a concert or play. It doesn't matter - just get out and have some fun.

I have taken the liberty of adding an eighth goal, which I call professional goals. Where do we want this profession to be at the end of 2006, and beyond? Task forces have been formed to discuss a variety of issues, which is all well and good, but the future of the profession still depends on you, the professional Oriental medicine practitioner.

What areas must this profession address to move forward in the years to come? One area is to achieve inclusion in the Medicare system. Some may say, "Why do we want to become involved with the insurance system?" Here are some reasons.

The majority of patients served by the Oriental medicine profession are Baby Boomers. These patients may be able to pay for treatments now, but as they age, their primary insurance will become Medicare. It also is imperative to be reimbursed by Medicare if we want to treat patients in hospitals. I have heard from various parts of the country that doctors and hospital administrators want to have acupuncture, but there are questions about how they will get paid when Medicare reimbursement is not available.

Professional goal number two - acupuncture students should be able to participate in federal loan forgiveness programs. Why are they not eligible for loan forgiveness?

Finally, acupuncturists should be able to treat veterans. Oriental medicine should be available for all veterans with reimbursement from military insurance.

What would it take to achieve these goals for the profession? Think about it.

Please remember that your goals should be SMART. This means:

- Make your goals specific - state exactly what you want.
- Make your goals measurable, so you can check your progress.
- Make your goals attainable; they need to be possible.
- Make your goals realistic (i.e., possible).
- Make your goals time-sensitive - set a deadline.

A goal is a dream with a deadline. Let us work together - set some goals and make it happen.

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