

Goal Tree

This activity is designed for adults, but could work with adolescents as well. It has its roots (literally) in analytic psychology. The goal is to look at what goals the participants have and to identify what steps need to be taken to make these goals realities through the language of metaphor. All through the exercise, it is encouraged for group members to talk amongst themselves, to the facilitator(s), or to the group at large in order to gain a more complete understanding of their goals and the influences upon them.

Process

What is needed for this exercise is paper and writing/drawing tools such as markers or crayons.

The first step is to identify a goal. Make sure that goals are realistic and measurable. Have the participants write down on the top or bottom of the paper what their goals are. Next, we are going to look at the parts of the goal tree and how each of them affects the goal.

Roots

We start drawing our goal tree at the roots. The roots of our tree are the skills and abilities we have which will help us make our goals manifest. Just as the roots of a real tree pull nutrients from the Earth, so shall these roots pull sustenance from the individual. Suggestions are strength, strong will, or any other internal trait that will be needed to make the goals come to life. Some of these roots might hinder rather than help. These influences, like procrastination, need to be identified and cut away from the tree.

Outside Influences

A growing tree has many influences that affect its growth from the world around it. Rain and sun help to sustain the tree, and wind serves to shape it somewhat. Fire and severe wind can serve to destroy the tree. Have the participants think about what influences, good or bad, are affecting their goals. Identify them and draw them onto the paper. They might want to have sun and rain reflect the good influences, such as a supportive partner or parents. Bad influences can be seen as fire or pollution, influences like non-supportive friends.

Trunk

The trunk of the tree represents the steps we need to achieve to make the goals manifest. Have the participants reflect upon their goals, and break them into manageable "baby steps". This is an ideal opportunity for group brain storming.

Fruit

Next, have them draw the leafy part of the tree and pieces of fruit growing in the tree. The fruit represents the goal achieved. Have the participants label the pieces of fruit to represent signs that the goal has been achieved. One might reflect money, another leisure time, or whatever they might see as a manifestation of their goal (thus the need for goals to be measurable).

The final step would be to have the participants report to the big group what their individual goal plans are by showing their tree and talking about what the parts represent.