

## Optimism Practice #1

# Slow and Steady Wins the Race

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**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Frequency:** As needed

**Level of Difficulty:** Easy

**Overview:** Pessimism often stems from feeling that we cannot possibly reach the finish line from where we are standing. We look off in the distance and see our goals, but the ground in between where we are standing and where we wish to go can feel insurmountable. But just as we cannot scale an entire ladder in one single step, we must remember that the path for reaching our goals can be a longer journey.

The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu famously stated that the "journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." When it comes to fostering hope towards the future and moving towards meaningful goals, it can help to keep this spirit in mind. In this optimism-building exercise, you'll be identifying important goals that you have for the future, and breaking them up into more manageable sub-goals. Whereas the larger goals can sometimes feel unattainable (like viewing the summit of a mountain when you're just about to climb it), the steps in between can often feel much more manageable. By focusing on these instead, we can begin shifting from a place of pessimism to a more optimistic mindset.

**Instructions:** Take a moment and reflect on some of the goals and dreams you have for the future. Consider various domains of your life, including your professional life, relationships, friendships, family, and hobbies. Although reflecting on these goals can feel exciting, it can also bring about feelings of dread or pessimism particularly if they feel rather far off. To overcome this obstacle, it helps to break down our larger goals into shorter sub-goals that can be completed one small step at a time. Feel free to use the prompting questions to help get you started:

*A long-term goal I have:*

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*When I hope to achieve this by:*

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*What is the first step I need to take in order to achieve this goal?*

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*Who can I turn to for support in helping me reach this goal?*

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*If I made progress towards this in the coming weeks, what would that look like?*

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*If I made progress in the coming months, what would that look like?*

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In the process of setting sub-goals, it can help to keep in mind the concept of "SMART Goals." SMART Goals are:

- **Specific**—the goal is clearly defined (e.g., who, what, where, when, and why)
- **Measurable**—the goal can be tracked in terms of progress (e.g., how much, how many)
- **Achievable**—the goal is attainable and realistic
- **Relevant**—the goal is worthwhile and related to our larger goals and dreams
- **Timely**—the goal has a time limit (e.g., when will it be accomplished by?)

By combining the focus questions contained above with the parameters of SMART Goals, you'll be well on your way to moving toward your goals!

**Notes/Impressions:**

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