

A GUIDE FOR TEENS

WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT?

HOW TO SET A GOAL AND

GO FOR IT!

Beverly K. Bachel

Foreword by Ann Bancroft,
polar explorer

free spirit
PUBLISHING®

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**To Steve—thanks for all
your love and support.**

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FOREWORD: A NOTE FROM ANN BANCROFT

“Getting through high school and college is one of my greatest achievements.” —Ann Bancroft, teacher, explorer, and author

I have always loved nature and the outdoors—and I’ve always had a hunger for adventure. When I was eight years old, I led my own mini-expeditions, convincing my cousins to join me on backyard camping trips in the middle of winter. (We lived in Minnesota!) At twelve, I learned about Sir Ernest Shackleton’s legendary 1914 Antarctic voyage on the ship the *Endurance*, which became trapped in sea ice just one day’s sail from reaching Antarctica. The ship eventually sank, leaving its crew stranded for nearly two years. (Thankfully everyone survived.) From then on, I knew I wanted to be a polar explorer.

As a teen, my goal was to go to college and become a teacher. Because I had a learning disability, school wasn’t easy for me. In fact, some days felt like a torment. But my goal to teach kept me focused on the future.

Today, I’m both a teacher and an explorer. I’m also the first woman to ski across the ice to both the North and South Poles. I had to overcome many obstacles along the way, but I’m living my dream and doing what I feel I was meant to do. And I know you can, too. No matter how impossible it may seem sometimes, you really do have the power to set your own course. It’s not easy, but it is rewarding. And your achievements—no matter how big or small—will stay with you for life.

If I could offer you only one piece of advice, it would be this: never accept “no” when it comes to pursuing your dreams. Believe in yourself and what you want to do, so you can get what you really want out of life. The skills you’ll learn from this book—including how to set goals, build a support team, and keep yourself motivated—will help you set your

course and make the most of your life. And this new and revised version, which covers the entire journey from inspiration to celebration, makes it even easier to put the power of goal-setting to work for you.

Whatever your dream might be, remember that you've got what it takes to achieve it. Now, get going!

Ann Bancroft is the founder of Bancroft Arnesen Explore (yourexpedition.com), an organization that empowers young people to achieve their dreams and explore issues that affect the world. Ann is also the founder of the Ann Bancroft Foundation (annbancroftfoundation.org), a nonprofit that gives girls the chance to live their dreams and reach their full potential. A popular speaker on the topics of teamwork, leadership, and goal setting, Ann draws on her experience making land, sea, and ice expeditions all around the world. She visits schools often and offers several kids' education programs, including "Dare to Dream," which was developed in conjunction with the author of this book.

INTRODUCTION

“Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us.” —Wilma Rudolph, Olympic track-and-field athlete

What are some of your dreams? Your hopes? We all have them. And it’s fun to imagine the amazing things you might do, be, achieve, learn, or have someday. But what about today? Are you doing anything right now to make your hopes and dreams come true? When you hear yourself saying, “I wish . . .” or “I dream . . .” or “I really hope . . .” or “If only I could . . .” it’s time to act. This book can help. How do I know? Because I’ve used the information in this book to reach my own goals. From making new friends to buying my first car, from improving my golf game to starting a business, goal setting has helped me accomplish all sorts of things—including writing this book (which for me is a dream come true).

When I was your age, I had lots of hopes and dreams. I knew there were thousands of possibilities out there, but I wasn’t sure how to make them real. I wish someone had shown me how to set goals. It wasn’t until I was an adult that I understood that goal setting is something you can learn—and even excel at—on your own.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book explains the why, what, and how of goal setting, so you can set and reach goals yourself. You'll discover what goals are, why they matter, and how you can use them to get what you *really* want. Throughout the book, watch for the "Hot Tip" boxes, where you'll find tools and advice for reaching your goals, and for "Goal Getters in Action," where you'll read stories from dozens of teens I interviewed. They're people just like you who've used goal setting to improve their lives. They live in small towns and big cities across North America and beyond. Their aspirations, personalities, and outlooks on life are as unique as their schools, families, friendships, and communities. No two are alike, but they do share a strong commitment to improving their lives and their world.

In addition to these all-new stories, this revised edition of *What Do You Really Want?* reflects new research on goal setting and includes expanded information and an updated list of resources. All of this will give you the practical skills you need to get what you really want—today, tomorrow, and for the rest of your life.

You'll also find forms that you can download, print, and then fill out on your own. (See page vi for download instructions.) Or you can photocopy or scan the forms. These forms will help you figure out your goals, plan and keep track of them, and most importantly, *go after them!* Even if you're tempted to write directly in this book, please don't (especially if it's from the library). Instead, copy, scan, or download and print the forms. This way, you can rework them if you need to—or complete them again and again for each and every goal.

The bottom line is that how you use this book is up to you. You can read it straight through, dive deep into a specific chapter, or browse the sections that seem most interesting. You can seek out inspiration by reading those "Goal Getters in Action" pieces I mentioned, and you can learn from others by using the forms called "Conversation Starters." On page 95, you'll even find out how to recruit a Goal Buddy who could

read the book along with you. However you choose to read the book, you'll want to create a Goal Tracker where you can keep a record of your goals and your progress. To get started on it, turn to page 12.

And remember, this book is intended to be a guide that you return to again and again. So don't just stick it on a shelf and forget about it! Instead, put it someplace—on your nightstand, in your backpack, by your computer—where you'll see it often. That way, you'll have a constant reminder to make the most of your life by going for what you really want.

What goals will you set for yourself? What hurdles will you overcome to reach them? Who will you turn to for help? How will you inspire yourself (and others) along the way? What will you do to celebrate reaching your goals? And then, what new goals will you set? There's no way to know until you dive in and get started.

Along the way, know that I believe in you and your ability to succeed. Also know that I'm here to help! I'd like to hear your questions and learn about your goals. You can email me at help4kids@freespirit.com. Or, send letters to:

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PART 1

**WHY
GOALS
MATTER**

WHAT'S A GOAL?

“A dream is just a dream. A goal is a dream with a plan and a deadline.” —Harvey Mackay, author and business owner

How did:

Twin sisters create a charitable organization that has brightened the lives of thousands of families in crisis?

A young cancer survivor raise more than \$50,000 for her invention of a backpack that makes it easier for kids with cancer to get around with their medical equipment?

A student who didn't speak English when he started school in the United States go on to become school president?

They did it the same way you can: by setting goals.

But . . . what *is* a goal, exactly?

Well, a goal is something you *want*, of course! But there's more to it than that. A goal is also something you're willing to work for, whether it takes days, weeks, months, years—or even a lifetime—to achieve.

Maybe you want to develop a new habit or break an old one. Maybe you want to meet new people or get better grades.



Hot Tip

Hopes and dreams are in your mind and in your heart—where they may stay forever unless you bring them to life. Goals help you do that. They make your hopes and dreams real by producing tangible results.

Perhaps you want to learn to play guitar, earn a spot on the team, get a summer job, go to college, or travel. Maybe you wish you were brave enough to stand up to someone who picks on you, strong enough to climb a mountain, or handy enough to build a bookcase. Maybe you wish you could

cure cancer, end poverty, or clean up the world's air and water.

Whatever you're considering, ask yourself: *Do I only wish it . . . or do I want it to be **real**?*

If you want it to be real, it's time to get goaling.

What if you've never had many (or any) goals? What if you've had goals but never reached them? What if you have goals now but never seem to achieve them? There's good news. You can learn to set and reach goals—even if you haven't had much experience or success in the past. Like any other skill—tying your shoes, dribbling a basketball, speaking a new language—the more you practice, the better you get.

TOP 10 LIST (REASONS GOALS ARE WORTH HAVING)

Reason #1: Goals help you be who you want to be. You can have all the dreams in the world, but if you don't act on them, how will you become who you want to be, or get where you want to go? When you know how to set a goal and go for it, you create a roadmap that takes you toward what you really want, step by step.

Reason #2: Goals stretch your comfort zone. As you pursue your goals, you may feel nervous or uncomfortable about some things, such as talking to new people, interviewing for a job, or asking adults for advice. Pushing yourself past your comfort zone is a great way to grow. It's also a safe way to take healthy risks.

Reason #3: Goals boost your confidence. When you set a goal and reach it, you prove to yourself and others that you've got what it takes to get things done. And when you do, you feel better about yourself—and better able to take on new challenges.

Reason #4: Goals give your life purpose. Goals show you—and the world—what you value. They also give you direction. When you're going after your goals, you're less likely to waste time or feel bored or restless.



“When I don't have goals, I spend more time with people who are just going with the flow. When I do have goals, I hang out with people who really want to get their lives together.” —Anna, 14

Reason #5: Goals help you rely on yourself. No matter your age, you don't have to let other people decide your life. You can take charge by setting goals and making plans to reach them. In fact, once you get into the goal-setting habit, you'll notice that you feel more independent. (And people around you will notice your new independence, too!)

Reason #6: Goals encourage you to trust your decisions. You're at a point in life where you're making more decisions at home and at school. Sometimes, it's easy to go along with the crowd or be swayed by what other people want you to do. But when you keep your goals in mind, choices become clearer and decisions become easier.

Reason #7: Goals help you turn the impossible into the possible. Goal setting breaks down seemingly out-of-reach dreams into small, manageable steps, which will help you turn your "someday" dreams into real-life accomplishments.



"I work a lot harder when I have goals than when I don't."
—Alec, 15

Reason #8: Goals prove that you can make a difference. Are your goals about changing your own life? Are they about changing the lives of others? Both? Whatever you set out to do, goal setting helps you achieve it and see clear results.

Reason #9: Goals improve your outlook on life. Goals help you move forward, which is much better than sitting still or going nowhere. This momentum is a real energizer. And you'll feel more positive, guaranteed.



"Achieving goals that matter makes me happy." —Clare, 15

Reason #10: Goals create feelings of satisfaction. Studies show that people who set and reach goals perform at higher levels and are more satisfied with themselves. In fact, if you look at the goal setters you know or admire (friends, family members, teachers, business owners, community leaders,

athletes, celebrities), you'll see people who are proud of their success and eager to achieve more.

Bonus reason: Goals help break negative habits. If you have a habit you'd like to break—oversleeping, gossiping, biting your nails, or playing too many video games, goal setting can help replace these behaviors with more positive ones.

3 GOAL MYTHS (DON'T BELIEVE THEM FOR A SECOND)

Myth #1: Who needs goals? I'll be fine without them.

False! Success doesn't just happen by accident or sheer luck. It's more often the result of having a clear destination in mind and working hard to reach it. Doing so can be very satisfying. You might even find that having goals gives you extra energy to put forth your best effort.

Myth #2: I have to wait until a specific date to set goals.

Contrary to what many people think, the start of a new year or a new school year isn't the only time (or even the best time) to set goals or begin making changes. In fact, there's no time like the present. Start right now and you'll be that much closer to reaching your goal.

Myth #3: I have to do it all by myself. It's true that setting and reaching goals is a personal process. But this doesn't mean you can't ask for help along the way. Believe it or not, there are people in your life—family, friends, teachers, coaches, and even some people you haven't met yet—who will want to help you in any way they can. Having their support can make pursuing your goals easier and more exciting!

3 GOAL TRUTHS (BELIEVE THEM FOR A LIFETIME)

Truth #1: Goals matter. Talk to any successful person—kid, teen, or adult—who has done something you admire, and chances are he or she will say it all started with a goal. Goals

help you project yourself into the future, and it is this ability more than any other that determines success. Goals also help enhance your physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Truth #2: Not enough people have goals. Studies show that only about three out of every one hundred people set goals. Even fewer actually write them down. (As you'll find out later in this book, writing down your goals is an important step toward reaching them.)

Truth #3: You can be someone who *does* have goals—a Goal Getter! Being a Goal Getter is within your reach. And it's simpler than you think. Let me show you how with a few basic steps:

- ✓ Think of something you want to do or achieve.
- ✓ Write it down on a piece of paper.
- ✓ Post the paper where you can see it.

Congratulations! You just did three things that every successful Goal Getter does. You thought of a goal, you wrote it down, and you made it visible.

GOAL GETTERS IN ACTION

Friends On and Off the Field

Fifteen-year-old **Clare**, who lives in a Los Angeles suburb, loves playing soccer. The only thing she likes more is playing soccer with her friends, so Clare scored big when she found a community league that combined both. "For me, it's a totally different game when I'm surrounded by friends," she says.

Clare also had a goal of making her high school freshman-sophomore team. "To achieve that, I had to push myself, but I didn't want to push so hard that I stopped having fun," says Clare. Her determination paid off. She made the team, and so did some of her friends. Now Clare has a new goal: "I want to start, because it's more fun to *play* with my friends than sit on the bench with them."

Making the World Better, One Cookie at a Time

Thirteen-year-old twins **Emma** and **Amy** are making a difference in the lives of others—and they started doing so when they were just kids. Back when the twins were seven years old, Emma saw a TV show about child entrepreneurs and realized for the first time that *kids* could start businesses! “I asked my mom if Amy and I could start one, and she said, ‘Sure, you can do anything you want,’” says Emma. “She also suggested that we do something to benefit others.”

Soon after that, the twins went to a summer cooking camp. That’s when they got the idea of giving families living in a nearby homeless shelter everything they needed to bake oatmeal-chocolate-chip cookies. The girls were already familiar with the shelter. They had been using their birthday party each year to collect items for the families living there. The girls thought that those families, like their own, would enjoy baking and bonding in the kitchen.

Thanks to a lot of hard work by the girls and their mom, their simple idea of doing something nice for others has grown into Bake Me Home (bakemehome.org), a charitable organization that brings together thousands of volunteers to help families in homeless shelters, kids in foster care, and members of the military. The organization also supports several food pantries in the Cincinnati area where the girls live.

The girls began by spending a lot of time in their family’s kitchen with one goal in mind—to perfect their cookie recipe. Once they did that, they set other goals. One was to get more kids involved with their project, and another was to find a church kitchen where those kids could come together to help. And when it became clear that Bake Me Home needed more space? The girls set a new goal of finding a building that Bake Me Home could call its home. After a lot of fundraising, they reached their goal and moved into that building.

Now the girls have other goals. Some are still related to Bake Me Home, but others are more personal: get good grades, go to college, find satisfying careers. Along the way, the girls plan to keep using the goal-getting skills they’ve already learned.

“A lot of people have grand plans and make unrealistic goals they can’t keep,” says Emma. “Then they feel like they failed. I think it’s better to start small. With small goals, you may think you’re not going to accomplish much, but those goals can grow into something bigger. That’s what happened to us. We just wanted to give out some cookies. We didn’t know it was going to grow into a big thing.”

YOUR GOAL TRACKER

Now that you know some basics of goal setting—plus a few myths and truths about goals—are you ready to get goaling? First you’ll need one important tool: a Goal Tracker. I suggest a blank book, spiral notebook, sketchpad, or three-ring binder—anything that gets you writing on paper and can be stored in a safe place.

Why is it important to use a paper Goal Tracker? Because writing (or drawing) by hand helps you get in touch with what’s in your heart, not just your head. Writing also helps you clarify your thinking—and your goals. I recommend a subject notebook with dividers and pockets for extra storage, but use whatever works best for you. And if you find paper really isn’t your style, you can use a phone, tablet, or computer.

Once you have your Goal Tracker, create two sections. Title the first section “Goal Keeper.” Keep the forms that you print,



Hot Tip

Remember, even if it might seem easiest and quickest to just write straight on the forms in this book, resist that urge! If you download or copy these forms, you’ll be able to get more out of this book in the long run.

copy, or scan here. Even if you’re skeptical about the forms at first, I encourage you to give them a try. They’re specially designed to help you get in touch with your dreams, clarify your goals, and keep you moving forward.

Title the second section of your Goal Tracker “Think

It & Ink It.” This will be your “thought log” for recording your answers to the “Think It & Ink It” exercises you’ll find throughout this book. Also use this section to record other thoughts, memories, and reflections as you follow your dreams and pursue your goals. Lots of young people (and plenty of adults, too, including Ann Bancroft, filmmaker Guillermo del Toro, and Major Leaguer Daniel Norris) put pen to paper to help them get in touch with their thoughts, track their experiences, and explore what’s happening in their lives. Journaling is also a great way to get to know yourself better. You can use your Think It & Ink It log to write about:

- ✓ why a particular goal has meaning for you
- ✓ how you felt before and after taking action
- ✓ problems you’re facing and how you could handle them
- ✓ ideas and feelings you want to keep to yourself
- ✓ anything else that’s on your mind

Here’s what some teens have to say about their thought logs:



“When I feel like I’m bottling up my thoughts and feelings and need to get them out, I write about them.”

—Alexus, 13

“I write my goals in big, bold letters. Then, I usually write how my day went, how I can improve, and what I need to keep working on.” —Wai Wai, 13

“I capture ideas, images, and emotions that I can pour into the song lyrics I write.” —Mary, 16

“I draw a lot, especially album covers.” —Carson, 15

Everything in your Goal Tracker, including your Goal Keeper and your Think It & Ink It log, is private. That means you have total freedom to scribble, doodle, express ideas, write random thoughts, rant and rave, or do whatever else

you're in the mood for. You can be messy or neat. And you can tear out any pages you don't feel like keeping. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, punctuation, or other details that might slow you down. The purpose of your Goal Tracker is to help you keep track of your goals and give you a safe place to express yourself in a way that works for you. No one else ever has to read what you write (unless you ask them to).

Once you've started your Goal Tracker, use these tips to get the most out of it:

- 1. Date your entries.** Dates give you reference points to help you track your progress. When you look back—whether that's four weeks or four years from now—you'll be amazed to see how much you've accomplished.
- 2. Use it often.** The more you use your Goal Tracker, the more you'll get out of it. You can write in it once a week, every few days, or every day.
- 3. Create an "ideas" page.** Jot down things you want to learn more about, questions you want to ask others, and ideas for activities you'd like to try.
- 4. Review it every few weeks.** Look back at what you wrote down weeks ago. It may take on new meaning in light of what you're doing today. And what you write today might help you solve a problem next week.
- 5. Be creative.** Personalize your Goal Tracker with photos, drawings, quotes, or whatever else will make it meaningful to you.

If you're not sure a Goal Tracker will help you, test it out for a few weeks. You may discover that writing, drawing, recording, and imagining can give you insight into what you really want—insight you couldn't get any other way. Regularly putting pen to paper can also keep you focused on your goals. So give it try!