



Achievement

The Importance of Setting Achievable Goals for Children

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“What you GET by achieving your goals is not as important as what you BECOME by achieving your goals.” Zig Zigler

Look around you. Most likely at your home, gym or office there are certificates, trophies, medals, ribbons or stars that were earned through effort acknowledging an achievement. They are on display as reminders of accomplishments that brought joy, recognition and pride. They are also emotional anchors – bringing back not only memories, but the feelings felt when they were received. And behind them, and what gives them significance, is the work, time, and perhaps struggle that were invested to achieve goals.

One of the challenges teachers and coaches face working with their students is creating achievable goals. If the goals are too difficult, our students struggle to learn, do not achieve success in a reasonable time, and may lose interest, motivation and the desire to continue. Setting achievable goals that can be reached within the time appropriate for the age and ability of our students, and acknowledging those achievements in tangible ways, becomes important if we are to keep our students excited and enrolled.

“No goal was ever met without a little sweat.”

COMMUNICATE GOALS CLEARLY

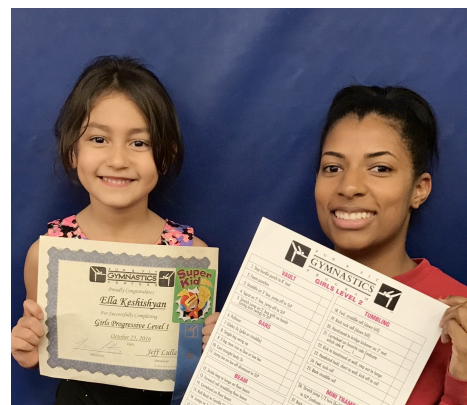
Don't expect parents and students to understand how learning gymnastics should be done. They often have no concept of skill progressions or the safety hazards involved in sports. It is up to us to provide them the roadmap for achieving their goals safely and a way to see how they are improving. A good way to do this is to provide them with a curriculum in levels, representing both short term and long range goals, track skills as they are introduced and learned, and provide rewards as each goal is accomplished.

“Without goals and plans to reach them, you are like a ship that has set sail without a destination.” Fitzbugy Dodson

SHOW THEM WHAT THEY WILL LEARN

Providing a curriculum list of skills in sequential order communicates that you will be teaching using a system of progressions from easy to more complex, step by step. This helps children and parents understand how learning gymnastics safely should be done.

When a child says “I want to flip” you can respond, “And I would love to teach you to flip. We will begin at Level 1 with Forward Roll downhill which will lead to a running Forward Roll on Level 2 and Dive Forward Roll on Level 3. Flips are introduced on Level 4 into the pit and on Trampoline when you reach Level 5. Here, let me show you on our Curriculum.” If you can provide each child with their own curriculum list or, as we do at Fun & Fit Gymnastics, provide each student with a poster of skills for each curriculum level, they and their parents will see exactly what they will be taught. And your classes can be structured based on these levels.



When the child understands that doing a Forward Roll (the short-term goal) is working towards learning a Flip (the long-range goal), they become motivated to do the roll and learn it well. Without this understanding they may be bored rolling and not care about doing it well since what they want to learn is a flip.

“Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishments.” Jim Rohn

REWARD EACH STEP IN THE LEARNING PROCESS – SHORT TERM AND LONG RANGE

When you celebrate the short term goal of passing a core (important and foundational) skill, you recognize the effort that went into learning that skill correctly. If you celebrate with issuing stars, certificates, ribbons or something else tangible, you create the feeling of pride and accomplishment that keeps motivation high and builds self-esteem. And you let the student and parents know the investment in a gymnastics education is attaining positive results.

A long-range goal is achieved when you celebrate the completion of all skills on a level as the student graduates to the next level of the curriculum. We recognize the student is ready to move up to the next level with an award certificate and photo with their instructor creating a memorable experience for the student. And, when this happens, we give them the next level curriculum poster setting new achievable goals.

ACHIEVEMENT & SELF-ESTEEM

Praise and reward without achievement of goals or personal best performances can cause confusion and undermine healthy self-



esteem and the value of hard work. This can happen when well intentioned teachers and coaches give praise and rewards for just showing up or when outcomes fall short of the students' best performance and ability but are better than others with less skill. While their intention may be raising the self-esteem of all performers, they may in fact be contributing to "conditional" self-esteem where self worth is determined by earning praise, recognition and medals even if personal performance is poor. Healthy self-esteem is best supported with a personal best value system rewarding and acknowledging goal achievement and personal best performances regardless of outcomes related to the performance of others.

“There is no achievement without goals.” Robert McKain

KEEPING GOALS ACHIEVABLE

It is important to consider how long it will take a student to learn a new skill once introduced. If it takes too long to experience success a student may become frustrated, depressed, lose interest and quit. And if too easy, the student will get bored.

The teacher needs to select each goal carefully keeping in mind the students' aptitude (learning readiness). The younger the student, the less time it should take for success to be achieved. Like climbing stairs towards the goal, smaller steps make the climb easier.

It's the teachers' job to make learning as successful as possible by responding quickly when students continue to struggle, fall and fail. Instead of having the student continue trying something beyond their ability, a skillful teacher should understand how to deconstruct the skill into more easily achievable steps. Deconstructing skills is the key to creating success and achievement for your students while keeping learning fun, safe and exciting. And that's what keeps kids loving gymnastics.



As a member of the USA Gymnastics National Preschool Committee, Jeff Lulla co-authored the Kinder Accreditation for Teachers (KAT) Course, and has served as a USA Gymnastics University Instructor for preschool and school age courses for decades. He is a member of the USAG National Safety Review team and a National Safety Instructor for USA Gymnastics. Jeff has also been a seminar presenter for the Amateur Athletic Foundation, Gymnastics Australia, Canada's Gymnastics B.C. and Ontario Conferences, the US Association of Independent Gymnastics Clubs, and USAG at the National and Regional Congresses. As an industry consultant, he has provided curriculum and helped design and open clubs and train staff in the USA, China, Vietnam, Canada, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand.

Jeff Lulla earned a B.A. degree in Physical Education from CSUN, and has over 30 years of coaching experience. Jeff received the USAG Business Leader of the Year Award in 2006.

In 1985 Jeff opened the first Fun & Fit Gymnastics Center in Burbank, in 1988 opened the second Fun & Fit Gym in Santa Clarita and in 2008 purchased his third location in Simi Valley, CA which he sold in 2013. The gyms also contract with private schools and their local city Park and Rec. departments teaching recreational gymnastics both on and off site.

In 1991 Jeff began to license a self-esteem building curriculum developed at Fun & Fit to other gymnastics schools and fitness clubs. Since then, hundreds of gyms internationally have licensed and used what is called the "Fun & Fit Gymnastics Program", its teaching systems, instructor training videos and DVD's.

In 2012 Jeff partnered with Smart Moves, a New Zealand company, to install his Fun & Fit Gymnastics curriculum along with hundreds of other skills, games, lesson plans and activities into their online lesson planning platform and to make it available via subscription to gym clubs globally.