

women's **running**



Goal Setting With Neely Gracey

Maybe you already have a goal in mind—a Boston qualifier, a 5K PR, a new distance. But if not, don't worry! And in fact, even if you think you know what you're aiming for, it's helpful to spend some time reflecting on what truly motivates you and fits with your life, right now.

Here are some thought-starter questions for setting goals:

What distance feels exciting?

Have you been eyeing any bucket-list races?

Can you swing race-cations with travel, or do you need to stay local?

Are you close to any qualifying times (i.e., Boston Marathon, Olympic Marathon Trials, or automatic entry into other major marathons)?

Is there a long-term quest that sounds interesting, such as going for your Six Star Finisher Medal or running a race in every state?

When you scroll social media or talk to runner friends, what are you jealous of or excited by?

Once you have some ideas, get honest with yourself about which goals make the most sense right now.

Answer honestly:

What's going on in the rest of your life? Are you spread thin and stressed out, or full of time and energy?

How's your support system? Do you have a partner/family who's on board, coach, training partners, a work schedule that allows for training, etc.?

If your goal is time-based—how far off are you? (If it's far, that doesn't mean you can't reach it; you just might need more time.)

Are you willing to try new things to reach a new goal?

Continued

What's your motivational style? Are you the type of person who's devastated if you set a goal and fail? Or do you derive satisfaction from taking big swings, even if you fall short?

If your goal is longer-term, can you set—and celebrate—some mini-goals along the way?

Does this goal truly bring you joy? Sometimes we set a goal because it's what everyone else is doing or what we think we "should," when in reality, a different goal speaks to our hearts.

Use the answers on the previous page to narrow down your goals and pick the one that makes the most sense, right now. Then, get specific.

I personally set an outcome goal (time, placement, or both) at the beginning of a training cycle. Or actually, I set three—and recommend my runners do too.

They are:

A. Your stretch goal—your personal-best qualifying time or what you think you can push yourself to achieve if everything goes right.

(For me this cycle: sub-2:26/top 10 finish at the Trials)

B. A slightly less ambitious, reasonably attainable goal if you have a decent race day

(For me this cycle: Finish the Trials)

C. Your fallback goal—what you can feel satisfied with accomplishing even if the weather is terrible on race day or you miss some training because of injury (Finishing strong—or finishing, period—is often a great C goal, especially for longer distances.)

(For me this cycle: Getting to the start line healthy)

Enjoy Goal Setting!