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Setpoints Worksheet

Define the goal you have.

Then, consider the following three things to find homeostasis and meet it:

1. **Receptor.** Consider all the ways you can “listen” to information being given to you about the goal you have. Emotions, pain, hearing, smell, touch, sight, thoughts, conscience, your “gut”- these are all receptors/sensors of information! And remember the importance of outside support in giving you information, as well. Write these “sensors” down- and what they are telling you (e.g., notice if you feel angry that a boundary has been crossed; pay attention to the way you feel- possibly safe OR distrustful- around certain people)

2. **Control Center.** Here’s where the fun begins. You get to determine what your own setpoints are in life (e.g., who to spend time with, what to say no to, options you have). Develop your setpoints wisely. Your brain can be part of this, but there’s so much more to rely on than your own brain. Set the foundation by determining the lines (boundaries) you have for yourself. Write them down here- the limits you have that you do not want to cross (e.g., a setpoint of getting help for substance abuse if you cannot keep your use in check). Be honest.

3. **Effector.** This is what applies your setpoint, to keep you on track. For example, if it’s not enough to just tell yourself not to eat dessert or just tell yourself to exercise, then you will probably need additional horsepower to effect change (e.g., getting a plan, hiring a trainer). You may need to consult with others, talk with a therapist, treat depression to help your motivation, cut out substance abuse to gain balance in the brain, and so forth.



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Setpoints Explanation: Why Being Negative Will Make You Stable

You're surrounded by setpoints every day. They literally keep you alive. One of them is your set body temperature. If your body drops or rises a mere 15% beyond your core temperature, death occurs. Think of a setpoint like a reference point, a sort of boundary. Medically, it's called *homeostasis*. The body regulates internal functioning (temperature, blood flow, oxygen) despite external circumstances. The body is always seeking homeostasis. So is the brain. And you can intentionally take charge for your mental, emotional, and relational health.

Examples.

In our bodies, we break out in a fever when something is wrong- which is one way the body makes conditions unfavorable to viruses and bacteria- because they are temperature sensitive. In addicts, their brains have faced an onslaught of dopamine rushes- and the brain counters it by producing less dopamine to balance out- even sometimes ELIMINATING dopamine receptors. This is the brain naturally seeking to turn down a party that's gotten too loud.

The system.

Balanced functioning (homeostasis), whether biological, technological, or psychological, will involve three interdependent elements that help reach homeostasis- all centered on a setpoint:

1. **Receptor**- A sensing component that observes changes in the environment. The receptor then sends information to the Control Center.
2. **Control Center**- determines an appropriate response, having a set range in place (setpoint). Then the control center sends this information to an effector.
3. **Effector**- Structures that receive signals from the control center and correct deviation by *negative feedback*, thus putting a system back into its normal range.

Remember from above how dopamine in the brain works with substance abuse? But we can actually gain the upper hand by being active in our decisions- including making setpoints for ourselves.

Get negative.

In order to bring a system back to normal, negative feedback is used to regulate it. So when I say, "get negative," or course I'm not telling you to have a negative outlook on life. What I AM saying is that a system that is out of control will only be put back in control/order by it being regulated by setpoints, carried out by either an internal or external force- and this is negative feedback.

Okay, have I been sufficiently nerdy? Let's get practical!!



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Samples. Check out how William uses all three processes of homeostasis as a married entrepreneur with children, who is also dealing with some alcohol abuse (#2 in each is the setpoint).

Entrepreneur.

1) Financial accounts are reconciled daily by William (outside help oversees them weekly). 2) The business plan was developed with a setpoint of no greater than \$100,000 debt. Crossing \$50,000 debt signals a problem and requires meeting with the board. 3) If the setpoints are not honored, the board has full power and autonomy to enact established strategies.

Temperature.

1) William's two year old, Thomas, is running a fever- revealed by his behavior, and then it was gauged with a thermometer. 2) If 24 hours pass with a fever over 100 F- or at any point it goes beyond 103 F- the setpoint has been crossed. 3) Visit the doctor immediately.

Remodeling.

1) Extra money was left over- discovered in the budget by William's wife, Katie. 2) They determine no more than \$10,000 will be spent on a kitchen remodel. The goal is \$8,500; beyond the goal is a warning flag. 3) At the \$8,500 mark, a conversation will be held with the contractor to hold to the budget.

Alcohol Use.

1) After running into various troubles with alcohol, William considered his personal/family values and health recommendations. 2) A setpoint was made: only 2 drinks or less daily. 3) If this line is crossed, the commitment is to have an entire month sober. If this cannot be done, it is agreed on with his support team to increase treatment (e.g., go to a group, go to counseling).

Got the hang of it? These steps can be applied to about anything, though I mostly use the Setpoints Exercise (click on the link below to access!) to help increase ownership and boundaries with addictions. It's a straightforward way to get honest with anything you are facing, the amount of help you need, and what supports can get you there. This concept has helped assist many of my clients to face problems squarely, and in turn, to be more successful and realistic in addressing life challenges. Give it a try!