

Here is a story to show how **Goal Setting** can be used to help depression

# The Shy Guy

## Joe first had problems

with other kids when he went into Grade Three. Up till then, he never really thought about how he got along with other people or what they thought of him. But that year, his family moved to another neighborhood and he had to start a new school. In his first week there, a couple of other kids made fun of him, teasing him. This was horrible, so he started to feel nervous and kept to himself.



When a girl in class approached him and said Hi, he felt so tense that he just stared at the ground and mumbled something. She walked away. He became more shy and stayed away from the other kids.

Eventually the other kids started to see him as unfriendly and this made it harder for him to talk to them. By Grade 7, he had no friends and spent all of his time after school by himself. He did well in his schoolwork, and he liked to read science-fiction, but he felt lonely and sad. Whenever another kid talked to him, he would think "she's just being polite",

"she'll soon see how boring and weird I am". Then he would feel tense, his stomach would seize up and he would go blank. He'd stare at the floor and mumble something until she went away, and then he would feel mad at himself for missing the chance to make a friend.

He felt sad and discouraged. He slowly became depressed. His grades began to slip because he couldn't get motivated to study. He told himself he was weak and weird for not having friends, but calling himself names just made him feel more discouraged and hopeless.

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**B**y Grade 10, Joe was failing some courses and it was clear that things were not OK with him, so his parents insisted that he visit the family physician, who realized that Josh had become mildly depressed and referred him to a psychologist for a type of treatment called CBT (cognitive-behavioural therapy). The physician realized that Joe didn't need

medication for this kind of depression, but help in connecting to other people. Also, the physician gave Joe a copy of this guide. Because he couldn't get to see the psychologist right away, Joe worked on his own at first to begin making changes in his life. He used Goal Setting to make a couple of activity goals, aiming to increase his time with other people.

### Joe's goal was to join a chat room of people interested in science fiction.

My Goal	How often?	When exactly?
Join a science-fiction chat room and read some of the messages	Once per week, for half an hour	Either Monday or Wednesday evening

The result of Joe's first goal was pretty good: at first he just read others' posts, then he tried sending a few of his own, and was pleased when other people answered in a friendly way.

Joe chose for his second goal to *talk more to people in my class*, so he set himself this specific goal: Ask a question about the lesson once every 2 days and thank that person for the information.

My Goal	How often?	When exactly?
Ask a classmate a question about the lesson	Twice each week	In English class

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**T**he result of the second goal was also a good one: asking about school work was easier for him than other kinds of talking. His classmates were surprised to hear Joe asking questions and even thanking them – they mostly responded in a positive way. These small successes made him feel more hopeful and less depressed.

When he began treatment with a psychologist, he learned to overcome anxiety, how to change his thinking to be more supportive of himself, and how to slowly increase his contact with other people. He learned to be more comfortable in group situations. He kept making small changes, felt more connected to other people and gradually came out of his depression.

