



Building a Healthy, Wealthy Future:

Helping Your Adolescent Plan for the Future

Jennifer L. Hunter and Nichole L. Huff, Family and Consumer Sciences



*There's no such thing as
 coulda, shoulda, or woulda.
 If you shoulda and coulda,
 you woulda done it.*

– Pat Riley, NBA championship coach

Most highly successful people can identify one or two individuals in their lives who encouraged them to work hard and achieve great things. Typically an athlete does not become an Olympic champion or NBA star by luck. Successful athletes, actors, and writers set goals and then work hard to achieve those goals. They look beyond their current situation to what it is they want to accomplish, a process called *visualization*. The same is true for young people who are passionate about a specific career, knowing from an early age that they want to be political leaders, social workers, or teachers, for example. If a young person can visualize a future career, he/she can take classes or volunteer with organizations that help achieve that goal. Young people can also visualize health and financial goals in a similar way. The following activity will help your adolescent begin to plan for the future by setting health and financial goals that he/she can work toward now:

1. **Talk about goal setting**—Talking to your adolescent about goal setting can be an important first step in helping him/her visualize the future and the potential steps that need to be taken in order to turn a goal into a reality. Begin by asking your adolescent to pick out one or two famous or successful people that he/she admires. Examples may include professional athletes, actors, or musicians or public, political, or historical figures. If you have access to the Internet, do a quick search together on the individual your adolescent selected along with that person's professional goals. (Typically you can type a person's first and last name, followed by the word *goals* into a search engine to pull up sites with that information.) Often you will find personal testimonies about how someone reached his/her current level of success and the goals he/she set to get there.



2. Set SMART goals—Explain to your adolescent that a goal is something he/she can aim for, something that can be accomplished. By setting goals, a person knows what he/she is working toward. Help your adolescent identify three financial and three health-related goals. To help your child understand the importance of planning for the future, at least one goal should be a short-term goal that can be accomplished in less than a year, one a mid-term goal that can be accomplished in one to five years, and one long-term goal that can be accomplished within five to 10 years.

As you encourage your adolescent to work through the process of identifying specific goals, help him/her complete the *Going for the Goal* worksheet. This worksheet will guide your child in developing SMART goals. A SMART goal is one that is **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timed**.

Each SMART goal has all five components, which are defined here:

- **Specific**—A specific goal should include objectives that specify what and when something will be accomplished. Example: I will save \$5,000 to purchase a used car by my 16th birthday.
- **Measurable**—A measurable goal is one with an end result that shows whether or not you achieved your goal. Using the car as an example, on your 16th birthday, do you have at least \$5,000 saved? If you do and can purchase a used car with your savings, you have accomplished your goal. The end result was measurable.
- **Attainable**—An attainable goal is one that you can actually achieve. For example, many people dream of winning the lottery. But since the chances of winning the lottery are often one in several million, this “goal” is just a dream and not attainable. However, saving \$5,000 for a used car is attainable with reasonable steps, such as getting a part-time job.
- **Relevant**—A relevant goal is one that is important to you personally. If a goal means something to you, you will have more motivation to achieve it.
- **Timed**—A timed goal tells you how long you have to accomplish the goal. Using the used car as an example, you need to save \$5,000 by age 16, or within three years if you are 13 now.

After your adolescent has set a goal, discuss each SMART component to ensure the goal is realistic.

3. Track Progress—After your adolescent has completed the *Going for the Goal* worksheet, discuss what he/she hopes to accomplish. Explain that in order to stay on track, it is important to monitor progress toward achieving a goal. Working with your adolescent, choose one financial or one health-related short-term goal to begin working on now. To help your adolescent visualize his/her progress, use the attached *Goal Tracker Worksheet*. The *Goal Tracker Worksheet* helps monitor progress over time through use of a graph. Depending on your adolescent’s age, you may need to help him/her create a graph and choose checkpoints. Be certain to discuss how minor setbacks can create a change in plans, but if he/she keeps working toward the goal, it is attainable. The important point is not to give up when working toward something that is meaningful.

Going for the Goal – SMART Goals

Goal	Why is this goal important?	Time Frame	Action Steps (Objectives)	How will I know I have reached my goal?

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Goal Tracker

1. From your list of goals, write down one SMART health or financial goal. Remember, a SMART goal is one that is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely.

SMART Goal: _____

2. How long do you think it will take you to accomplish your goal?

3. Create a graph to monitor your progress. Use the example provided as a guide.

- a. Mark your anticipated end date on the graph paper as shown in the example.
- b. Identify time intervals (one week, two weeks, one month) to check your progress toward your goal. These time intervals are known as checkpoints.
- c. At each checkpoint, mark your progress to chart your savings at each point on the graph as shown in the example and write one to two sentences about your progress. Remember, set-backs are OK when you are trying.

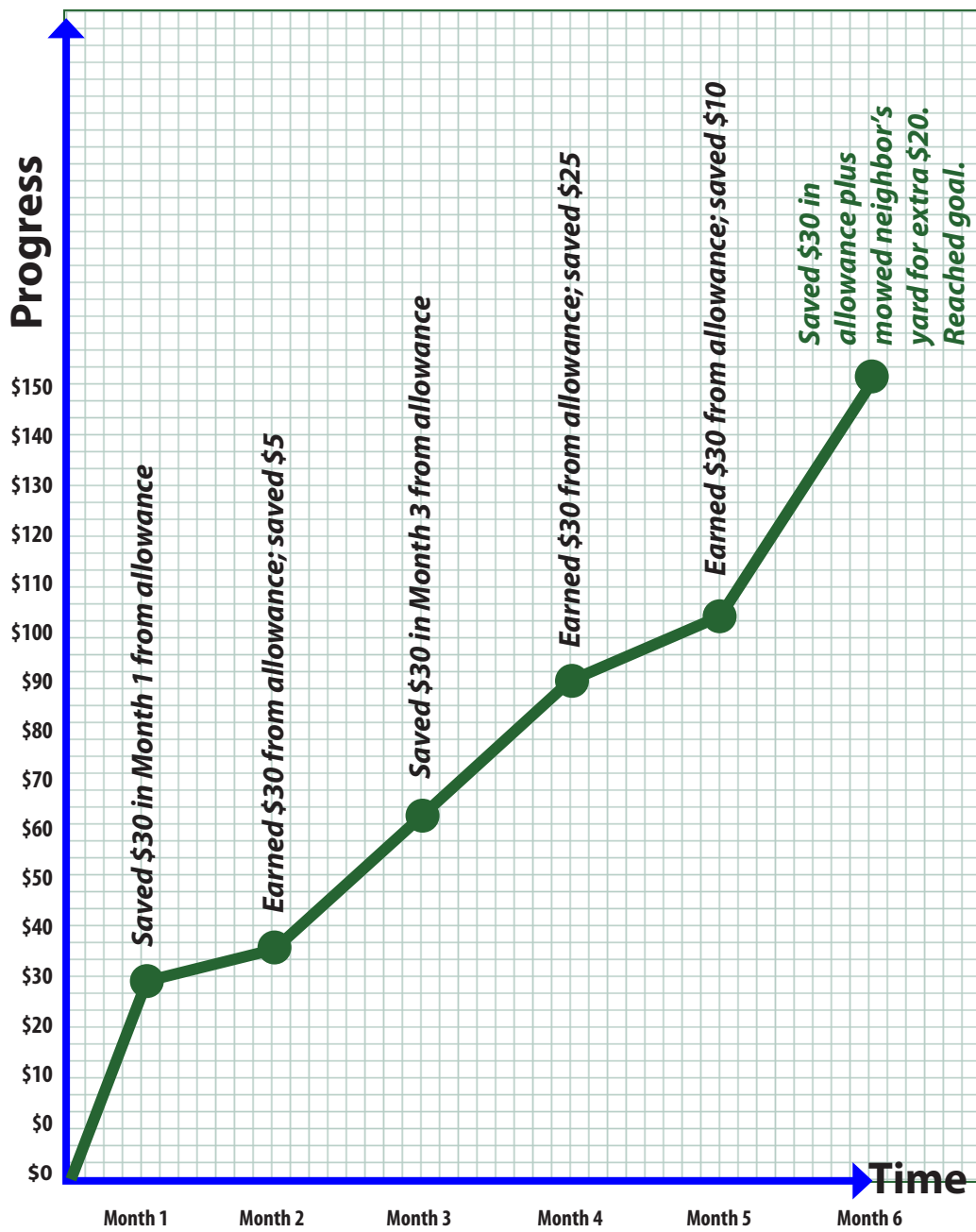
Checkpoint 1: _____

Checkpoint 2: _____

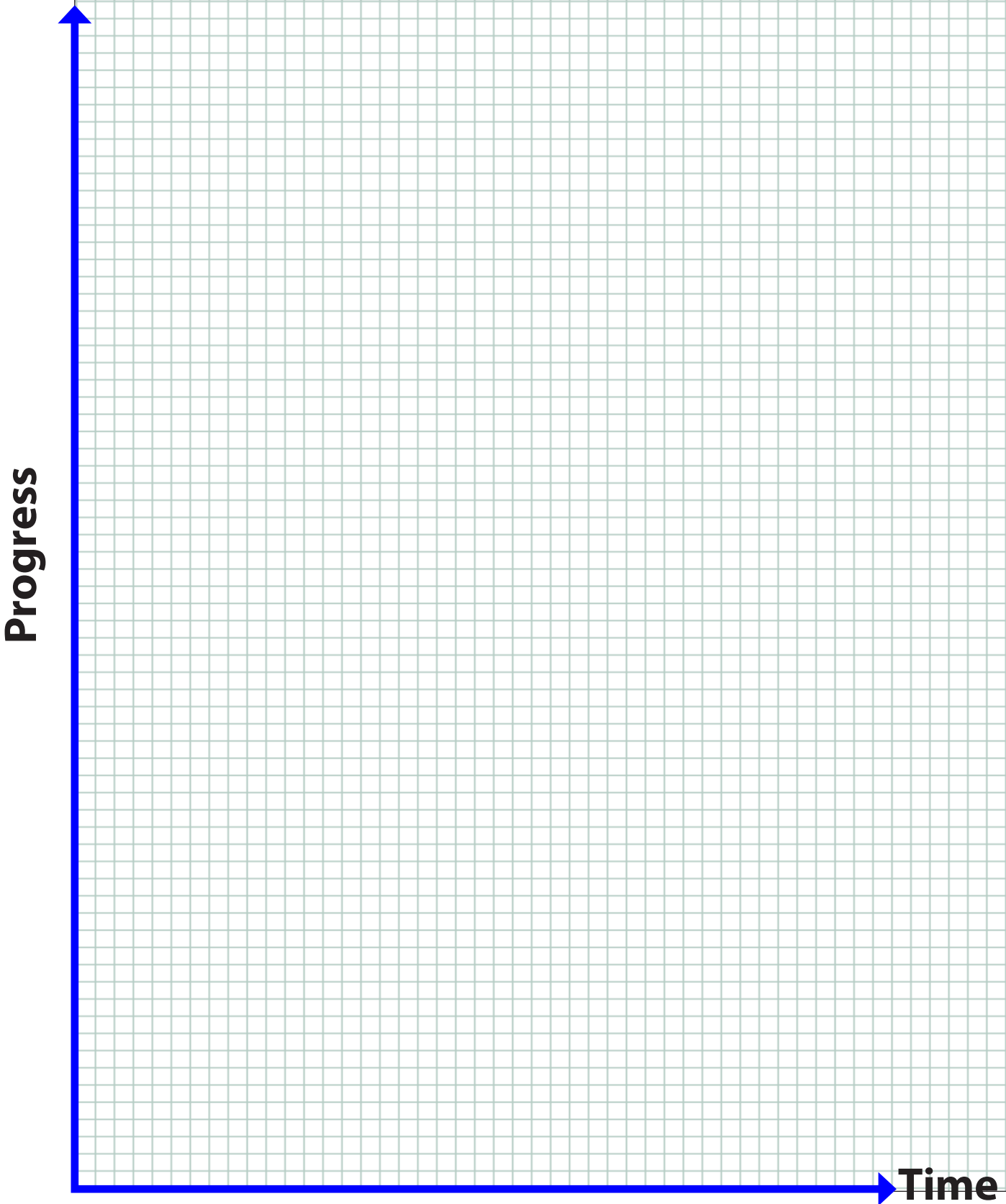
Checkpoint 3: _____

Checkpoint 4: _____

Example Goal: To Save \$150 in 6 Months to Buy an iPod touch®



My Goal: _____



My Goal: _____

