



Top 20 Tips for Achieving BIG AUDACIOUS GOALS

If you have a goal or aspiration that is so big that the thought of it makes you feel a combination of excitement, nervousness and a considerable dose of scepticism over the likelihood of achieving it: **CONGRATULATIONS!**

You officially have a big audacious goal, and I'd love to help you to achieve it.

My most recent audacious goal was to run a marathon, and I did it. Looking back on the process of achieving that goal, I recognised some elements that have been common in every big goal I have ever achieved.

Here are my top 20 tips for achieving big audacious goals. They have been grouped into three categories: Marathon Mindset, Support Crew, and Process.

Whilst I refer repeatedly to my experience of preparing for a marathon, I hope you will find these tips more broadly applicable to whatever audacious goal you set your sights on.



Marathon Mindset

1. Most of your success is determined by your mindset.

So, the first step in cultivating a marathon mindset is to recognise that, without it, you are unlikely to achieve your audacious goal. I think these two articulate this pretty well, and their results speak for themselves:

“Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t – you’re right.”

Henry Ford

“Success in life is 80% psychology and 20% mechanics.”

Tony Robbins

2. Attach a significant meaning to your goal.

Although the “what” of your goal is important, the “why” of your goal is critical. Our biggest and most audacious goals have to be meaningful. Without a really clear “why”, we are unlikely to withstand the challenges we face in the pursuit of our goal. The meaning of your goal is also crucial because it probably doesn’t make “rational” sense.

If you feel you have to justify your goal on the basis of pros and cons, you may decide it is not worth pursuing. Or worse – you may be talked out of it by others who simply don’t understand it. When I think about most of my audacious goals, they don’t make a lot of sense. However, the meaning behind achieving them was something that mattered enough that they were important for me to pursue.

A strong “why” will help you overcome the doubts of yourself and others about the wisdom of pursuing your goal.



3. Create a highly detailed scene in your mind of you achieving your goal.

Make it as sensorially rich as possible (what will it feel like? look like? sound like? who will be there?) and recreate it in your mind regularly. A great idea is to form a habit of recreating your visualisation as part of your regular routine – e.g., each time you brush your teeth, recreate your visualisation.

The more often you recreate your visualisation, the more certainty you will develop within yourself that it is not a matter of “if” but “when” you will achieve your goal.

4. Commit to the journey.

Whether your goal is to run a marathon, start a business, complete a qualification, or something more fun than any of those, it is imperative that you commit to the journey right from the outset. Along that journey there will (almost) inevitably be setbacks, disappointments, moments of doubt and frustration. However, when you commit to the journey, you do not allow those setbacks to become deal breakers.

An important thing to remember is that it is actually the journey that makes the goal big, audacious and meaningful. If we could achieve the goal quickly and easily, it probably wouldn't hold much meaning for us.

Committing to the journey means expecting and accepting that the path may not be linear, but it is still worth the effort.



5. Expect setbacks and look for the lesson.

Setbacks are part of the process and can often teach us something. Just as it is necessary to go down in order to acclimate and thus progress up Mt Everest, sometimes what we perceive as setbacks are necessary in order for us to progress towards our goals.

When I first started running, I often experienced knee pain. This was frustrating and I perceived it as a setback, because it interfered with my training. However, I later discovered that my knee pain was likely caused by overtraining, which was the result of me being super keen and completely oblivious about how to train safely and in a way that ensures longevity.

This taught me some valuable lessons that I continue to benefit from 6 years later, e.g., rest days are not “slacking off” – they are actually vital to ensure you are able to train properly; and I needed someone who knew what they were doing to help me train safely (more on this later).

Learning this lesson meant that I have avoided any further injuries, so the minor knee pain I experienced was reframed from a setback to a valuable lesson.



6. Enjoy the scenery and the journey – don't just focus on the destination.

Although it is important to keep the end goal in mind, it is great if you can appreciate the sights along the way. One of the reasons I chose to complete the Mt Cook Aoraki Marathon was the scenery. I figured if I was going to be running for almost 4 hours, I wanted to have something to look at!

However, this advice doesn't just pertain to the marathon itself. There were many beautiful sunrises/sunsets/horizons to appreciate during my training runs as well.

When you are pursuing your goal, take the time to appreciate where you are in the moment: not because you have reached your goal, but because you are on your way.



7. Not every session will be enjoyable or easy, but every step/session is progress.

Or, phrased another way, “Don't poo-poo progress”. There will be times in your journey that you don't feel great about what you have to do. For me, some training sessions were pure hard work. It was too early, too cold, too dark, too hot, too whatever excuse I manufactured at the time, and I didn't want to go.

However, my “why” was big enough, and I was scared enough that I wouldn't finish the run if I skimped on my training, that I got out of bed and did those sessions anyway.

Each session I completed brought me that much closer to my ultimate goal. Sometimes, when I was really unmotivated, I reminded myself that every step, no matter how uncomfortable, was one closer to the overall goal.

8. You can't rely on motivation alone.

This point maps neatly onto the previous one. Motivation is unreliable. It peaks and wanes and is something of a fair weather friend.

Motivation tends to be high when things are going well, and it drops dramatically when things become difficult. Therefore, if we rely solely on motivation, we will almost certainly fall short of our goal.

9. Back yourself. If it matters enough to you, you will find a way.

If your goal is meaningful enough, you are committed enough, and you want it badly enough, you will get the job done.

It may not look how you anticipated, and you may resort to Plan B, C, D or E, but if you have the right mindset, surround yourself with the right people, and commit to the journey, have belief in yourself to achieve your big audacious goal.

10. Pain might be part of the process, but don't let that deter you.

The things we really want may require sacrifice, and even pain. That doesn't mean they are not worth pursuing. It means that you have to be fully committed to doing whatever it takes to achieve that goal.

It is important to learn the difference between the pain of effort and growth and the pain of overdoing it and injury. The pain of effort and growth is that which comes when you are pushing yourself out of your comfort zone, but in a way that is consistent with improvement and is not causing damage.

There is an interesting phenomenon that most long distance runners experience – at some point in most runs, it will hurt. You may even consider stopping. However, if you push through that discomfort, it goes away. This is very different to the pain of an injury or over-exertion, such as dehydration or heat stroke. Similarly, in other endeavours, we may experience discomfort or unease, as a result of placing ourselves in situations we have not previously encountered.

Before you pull back or out because of pain, check to see if this is the pain and discomfort of growth, or that of injury. If it is the former: push through it. If it is the latter: stop, re-assess, and find another way.

Support Crew

11. You can do well on your own but better with a coach.

As I alluded to above, when I first discovered running, I was highly enthusiastic and completely ill-prepared to design my own training regime. My training approach consisted of going as far as I could, as often as I could, in the time available to me. That approach undoubtedly improved my fitness, and enabled me to complete several events, including my first two half-marathons. However, it also meant that I was training too much, training inefficiently, and causing myself injuries. In addition, to my great frustration, despite my determined and consistent efforts, I could not improve my Park Run time to the extent that I felt my training justified.

When I enlisted the help of a coach, a number of things happened. Firstly, the amount of training I was doing decreased. Secondly, the type of training I was doing diversified. Thirdly, and much to my delight, my Park Run times started coming down. By a lot! One of the first things my coach told me was that attempting to smash out a PB every week at Park Run was futile. Instead, the best way to improve my Park Run time was to set a target Park Run every few months. So, I went from busting myself to break my own records every week, to focussing my efforts on a few select runs per year and brought down my PB to a time I never dared to dream was possible.

The key point from this unsolicited running advice, is that a coach will know when to push you and when to pull you back. Whether it is a business coach, a mentor, or someone who has done what you are attempting to do, enlisting the help of an expert can take you from good to great.

Whilst you can you achieve things without a coach, getting support from a coach is likely to make the process quicker, easier, and potentially more effective.



12. Seek advice from experts.

Typically, big audacious goals involve multiple components. It is important that you seek advice from those who are properly equipped to help you. In addition to a coach or mentor, it may be relevant to seek advice from other experts. Sourcing a team of experts to guide you on your journey to your audacious goal can be an important part of your success.

Don't waste time or energy on things that are beyond your skill set, unless mastering those skills is crucial to the achievement of your goal.

13. Everyone will have an opinion, but that doesn't mean you have to listen.

We all have well-intentioned friends and family members who, in their desire to keep us safe or protect us from disappointment, will express their concern that you probably shouldn't be doing what you are doing. If your goal is actually dangerous, this might need to be considered. However, if you have sought advice from experts and are following their recommendations, my suggestion is to thank your loved ones for their concern, and politely ignore their advice.

I recommend that you take advice from those who truly understand *why* you are pursuing your goal. When they understand the significance of your goal, they will see past the logical and rational reasons why you shouldn't and believe that you should. I love the quote from Teddy Roosevelt's 1910 speech, more recently made famous by Brené Brown's reference to it as the inspiration for her book, *Daring Greatly*:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly."

I had well-meaning family/friends/acquaintances helpfully pointing out the potential damage to my joints from “all that running”, as well as some less-than-subtle comments about the fact that I am “not as young as I used to be”. (Thank you, Captain Obvious!) However, I also had my husband and my Mum encouraging me to pursue the marathon dream, for no reason other than that it was my dream. It was their happy faces, along with those of my kids, who greeted me at the end, and that meant the world to me.

Listen to those who have earned the right, by being in the arena with you, or at the very least, are cheering you on.



Process

14. Get an accountability partner. STAT.

Whilst it is helpful and highly recommended to have a good support crew, having an accountability partner is CRUCIAL to the process of achieving big goals. So crucial, in fact, that it is the first thing I recommend you do after identifying your big audacious goal. If your accountability partner shares your goal: fantastic! You can support each other.

However, they don't have to share your goal to qualify as an accountability partner. As long as they understand your vision and your "why", and, most importantly, are prepared to hold you accountable, they qualify. Knowing that you are accountable to someone will ensure that you do the work and commit fully to the process.

Your accountability partner will be an excellent substitute for motivation, when it deserts you. They will become the little voice inside your head that says, "You've got this. Keep going."

15. Be mindful of what you are fuelling yourself with – nutrition, advice, content.

In your pursuit of your audacious goal, it is important that you take care of yourself. Good nutrition is obviously important, regardless of your goal. However, this also relates to what you are consuming in terms of information, and how/where you are spending your energy. Reading books and articles and listening to podcasts that are informative, uplifting, encouraging and inspirational can be extremely helpful. You can benefit from the actionable tips you encounter, as well as the mindset enhancement that comes from ingesting positive content.

Make sure whatever you are consuming is nourishing rather than depleting you.



16. Break your big goal down into manageable chunks AND celebrate milestones/little wins along the way.

I have noticed that although most of us are able to break things down into manageable chunks, we don't always savour the small wins along the way. This is important, as it feeds our fair weather friend, motivation, and helps us to enjoy the journey.

Although it is important to celebrate achieving our audacious goal, we shouldn't wait until then to celebrate the progress we have made.

17. Adopt a broad awareness but a sharp focus.

When we are pursuing audacious goals, we may feel overwhelmed by all the things we must undertake. We may feel as though we have many competing demands and try to do everything at once, which means we don't do anything properly. Or, conversely, we may become hyper-focussed on a single aspect of our preparation, and neglect everything else. Neither of these approaches is likely to support your success.

A more balanced approach is: "broad awareness; sharp focus".

This approach means we identify the many elements that need to be integrated in order to achieve our goal. Once you have identified the requisite components, you can focus on each of them systematically.

This doesn't mean you focus exclusively on one thing until it is complete. It means that, whatever you are working on in the moment has your full attention. You can rest easy knowing you have a good appreciation of all you need to do, but you don't need to do them all right now. This approach is a dynamic one, which allows you to move between tasks (and back again) if necessary, in an organic way.

For example, when preparing for a marathon, it is important that you build up your stamina, strength and speed. However, you don't need to do them all in the same session. A typical program will include a combination of long runs, moderate runs, speed/interval sessions and hill sessions. You may also include some cross training or strength work.

Together, these sessions address each of the target areas, however they don't necessarily do them all at once. Towards the end of your preparation, you will integrate those aspects: i.e., aim to do your long runs at a faster pace. However, in the early days, focusing on each aspect individually is most conducive to building your overall capacity to achieve your goal.

18. You need to do the work. There are no shortcuts.

Similar to the mindset tip of committing to the journey, this tip relates to the mechanics of doing the things you need to do to achieve your goal and doing them properly. This means that you don't skimp on your training sessions, or your study sessions, or whatever you need to do to build the muscles you need for your goal. You don't look for the easy way out, so you can tick something off your list without exerting any actual effort.

To illustrate the importance of doing the work, I love the analogy of climbing Mt Everest. In order to survive at the summit of Mt Everest, you need to have climbed the mountain. If you were helicoptered to the top of Mt Everest, you would probably die, because your body was not properly prepared for the conditions at the top of that mountain.

The only way to survive being on top of Mt Everest is to do the climb.

That climb involves going up, and then going back down, to allow your body to acclimate to the new altitude. This demonstrates that, not only are there no shortcuts, sometimes we have to go back over ground we have already covered in order to progress closer to our goal.



19. Listen to your body/gut/intuition – sometimes the thing you need to do most is rest. BUT stay in momentum.

Just as I discovered the importance of “rest day”, it may be necessary to take a step back from your goal to rejuvenate. Similar to the notion of “overwatering your plants”, it is possible that you can become ineffective in your pursuit of your goal if you don’t take the opportunity to put some distance between yourself and your goal at times.

Sometimes the most powerful way of progressing toward our goal is to step off the path and appreciate where we are.

Whilst it is important to rest, recover and rejuvenate, try to stay in momentum. The best way to do this is to do something small but useful, even when you are taking a break. It could be as simple as going for a walk or doing some stretches instead of a run or reading an informative article that gives you some ideas to implement.

Keeping the momentum going, even when the big tasks seem hard, can be extremely powerful.

20. Develop a practice of gratitude and appreciation. EVERY DAY.

Developing a practice of gratitude and appreciation is extremely empowering. When you routinely recognise the many people and things for which you feel grateful, your wellbeing will be enhanced.

Practising gratitude will not only help you reflect on the progress you are making (hello motivation!), but you will feel grateful for where you are, rather than focussing on where you need to get to.

I hope you find these 20 tips for achieving your audacious goal helpful. I’d love to know which of them you find (a) easiest; and (b) most challenging.

If you would like support to achieve your audacious goal, please feel free to contact me via email: kate@astuteecs.com.au. I’d love to connect with you.

Good luck!

Kate