Health Dreams Can Come True
By Gordon Botting, DrPH, CHES

Ten years ago a 33 year-old Israeli lawyer made medical history as the first recorded case of a dreamless sleeper. As a result of this army research, scientists have been able to pinpoint what they believe is the dream center of the brain. Since the lawyer apparently leads a normal active lifestyle, this new evidence has fueled the debate over whether other psychological functions are performed by dreaming.

As the New Year begins, the question before you and I is not whether we dream at night, but do we really dream during our waking hours? It is not just having clear and achievable goals, but the ultimate objective is making sure they will come to fruition during 2010. Even to this unfortunate lawyer I would say wake-up and make your daytime dreams come true. By using the acronym DREAMER you can start finding the plans God has for your general wellbeing and optimum health.

D.R.E.A.M.E.R.

D = Definite
For your vision or goal to become a reality it must be stated in definite, precise, and distinct terms. A goal stated in vague terms gives little or no direction to your future health. An example of a vague goal is: “This year I will become a healthier person.” Good, but not good enough! Say instead a definite objective: “I will get 8 hours of sleep each night by retiring to my

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E = Enthusiasm
Enthusiasm will lift your dream out of the ordinary and make it something special. Goals should be a source of excitement and passion. Disappointments and frustrated hopes will conspire to dull your long desired health objective. Not under any circumstances let people or problems rob you of your lifetime aspiration. Charles Schwab, the chairman of Bethlehem Steel, summed it up this way: “A person can succeed at anything for which they have enthusiasm.”

R = Rewards
If there are no benefits to you, you probably will not even start. Remember to reward yourself with things that will keep you focused on your wellness goals. For example, if your dream is to be the same weight as you were in college, rewarding yourself with cheese pizza and an ice cream sundae every time you lose a pound or have a new notch in your belt may not be the way to go. However, rewarding yourself with a new CD/DVD or new clothes along the way will keep you from becoming discouraged.

H = Health Unlimited
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U = Unlimited
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bedroom at 9 o’clock each workday evening.” Two crucial reasons individuals fail to stay focused are that they set goals to please others or they have not thought through how to attain their dreams. It is very much like when you were a child. You learned that when you held a magnifying glass over a pile of old newspapers, if you kept moving, the power of the magnified sun would fail to start a fire, but focus its power, and you would light a flame.

**R = Realistic**

Part of being realistic is to acknowledge the obstacles you must overcome to reach or obtain your dream. On a piece of paper, list those items that may challenge or hinder you pursuing your purpose — be specific and honest. Anticipate potential problems by coming up with several scenarios, creative ideas or solutions. Look at possible problems like the early railroad builders. When they encountered a mountain before them they had at least three choices — they could use the switchback method over the summit, find another route around the mountain or tunnel through it. For many people, problems cause them to procrastinate. If you find yourself dillydallying, jump-start yourself by breaking the project into smaller tasks or committing to half-an-hour per day until you overcome the difficulty.

**E = Educate**

List skills or “know-how” you need to obtain your goal. This could be an evening college course, watching a DVD, reading a magazine article or book or an attending a seminar on your new health habit. Identify individuals (health coach) or institutions (gym) that will provide help for you to reach your goal — either with information or support. More importantly, spend time with people who are already receiving the benefits of their healthy life-style.

**A = Achievable**

Goals should be realistic and reachable. You should never start something that is so grand that it is in the realm of Hollywood fantasy or the supernatural. Clearly, if it can’t be reached, it isn’t a goal at all. Your dream should not be out of sight, but just out of reach – so you have to grow and stretch toward it. This may mean you will continue you’re walking or jogging program not to necessary compete in a 26 mile marathon, but at least work towards a 5k walk/run. However, that doesn’t mean you should not set your sights a little higher by having a practical, down-to-earth BIG dream. Big proposes and plans create excitement. There is no fun or fulfillment in the average or mediocre.

**M = Measurable**

As you move toward that specific objective, you need to qualify how you are doing at each stage. Review your dreams on a regular basis such as monthly, quarterly or annually. An example would be measuring your blood chemistry every three months and rejoicing in a lower blood pressure or higher HDL — the good cholesterol. Having a blood chemistry taken by your lab or at your physicians office helps to make sure you are still in focus. Another way to determine if you are on the mark is to assign target dates for accomplishing your goals. Set a deadline for each dream. It will increase your motivation and commitment as well as enable you to pinpoint your progress at each stage.

“The man with average mentality, but with control, a definite goal and a clear conception of how it can be gained and, above all, with the power of application and labor, wins in the end.”

— William Howard Taft

“First say to yourself what you would do; and then do what you have to do.”

— Epictetus