

GETTING WHAT YOU want from college, a career, or even a relationship takes planning. You can't just wait for something to happen. You must set a goal, make a plan to achieve it, and follow through. If your plan isn't working, be flexible enough to make the changes that will lead to success. How do you react when your plans don't work or your goals seem out of reach? How do you react to problems? Do you take steps to solve them, or do you figure they'll eventually work out without your help? You probably know some students who can't seem to cope with grades, work, relationships, or finances while others seem to lead problem-free lives. Is it luck? No. The students who cope have learned problem-solving skills.

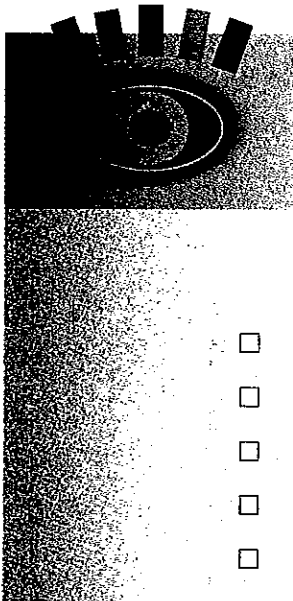
Your fourth key to success in college, critical thinking and study skills, unlocks two more valuable life and career skills explained in this chapter: **goal setting** and **problem solving**. These skills can help you plan effectively and solve the problems that are bound to arise as you continue your education. They will also make your life at work easier and more productive.

This chapter will help you accomplish the following objectives:

- Set goals for success in college.
- Set reachable long-term and short-term goals.
- Use the COPE method to solve problems.

Set Goals for Success in College

YOU CAN BE successful if you set goals based on what you want to accomplish. If success in college is your goal, determine what you want out of your education. Do you have a career goal, or are you undecided? What other rewards does a college education offer? Ask yourself, "Why am I here?" To help you clarify your reasons for coming to college, complete Awareness Check 7.



Awareness Check 7

WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE?

Check the reasons for attending college that match your own or add a different reason in the space provided.

- 1. I want to earn a degree, but I haven't yet chosen a major.
- 2. My friends are in college, and they want me to be with them.
- 3. My parents want me to get a college education.
- 4. I want to prepare myself for a career of some kind.
- 5. I have an athletic scholarship, veteran's benefits, or some other source of funding.

- 6. I want to make a lot of money.
- 7. I want to improve my skills so that I can get a better job than the one I have now.
- 8. I want to broaden my knowledge.
- 9. I wasn't able to go to college when I was younger; now I want that experience.
- 10. Improving my education will help me advance to a higher-level position at work.
- 11. I am a non-native speaker of English, and one of my goals is to improve my language skills.
- 12. Your reason: _____

A goal should be something that you desire and that you will be motivated enough to reach. Your answers to the Awareness Check provide the key for understanding how your reasons for attending college can motivate you to reach your goals. If you checked only item 2 or item 3, for example, then you may have difficulty motivating yourself to do well because your reasons for attending college are based more on others' expectations than on your own. You need to decide what you want out of college. If you checked only item 7 or item 10, then you have a more specific goal in mind and are probably already working to accomplish it. You may need to find additional motivation only if you encounter a setback. If you checked only item 1 or item 4, then you have a practical reason for being in college, but you have not chosen a career or major. As soon as you do that, course selection will be easier because you will be motivated by a clearer sense of direction. If you checked only item 6, then you may have set an unrealistic goal. A college education, though it does prepare you for a career, does not guarantee that you will make lots of money. Motivation is easier to find when your goals are realistic, and you believe you can achieve them. If you checked item 11, your college may have a special program for non-native speakers of English. You may have already recognized this program's value to your success in college and career.

Perhaps you checked several items. Checks beside items 7, 8, 9, and 10, for example, could mean that you are seeking a college education to broaden your understanding and to provide access to a better job. If you checked items 1, 4, and 5, then you may be a student who wants a degree and has the funding to get it, but you are still exploring the possibilities of what you might do with your education. A visit to your college's career center might help you decide on a major or set a career goal that will keep you motivated.

Here are some other reasons for attending college that you may or may not have considered. In the courses you take, you will be exposed to new ideas, beliefs, and ways of looking at the world. At times, you will be excited by what you are learning; at other times, you will be frustrated by opinions and values that challenge your own. A college education can help you develop a flexible and open mind, sharpen your ability to think, and enrich your life. Best of all, you may discover in yourself talents, skills, and interests that you did not know you possessed.