Goal Setting in Mentorship
A Practical Guide for Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons

ISAPS® Mentor Program

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Setting clear, actionable goals is key to making the most of your ISAPS mentoring relationship. This guide helps mentors and mentees define, track and refine meaningful goals that align with surgical training, professional development, and personal growth in aesthetic plastic surgery.

WHY GOAL SETTING MATTERS

In aesthetic plastic surgery, mentorship spans clinical learning, professional development, ethics, communication, and career guidance. Without clear goals, even well-intentioned mentoring can drift or lose impact. Mentorship is most effective when it has purpose. Setting goals helps mentors and mentees stay focused, motivated, and aligned throughout their collaboration.

Benefits of Goal Setting:

- Direction & Focus
  - Goals give the mentorship a clear purpose beyond general conversations.

- Better Use of Mentor Support
  - Mentors can offer targeted feedback and resources.

- Measurable Progress
  - Goals create a benchmark to track and reflect on growth.

- Motivation & Accountability
  - Goals push mentees to act between meetings.

- Confidence & Clarity
  - The process helps mentees understand what they want to achieve and how to get there.

Goal setting is not a one-time task - it should be reviewed and refined throughout the mentoring relationship.

GET STARTED WITH PERSONAL REFLECTION

Before writing SMART goals, begin with honest reflection. Consider:

- Why did I join the ISAPS Mentor Program?
- What do I hope to gain from this experience?
- What challenges or gaps am I currently facing?
- Where do I want to be in 6 months? 2 years?
- Is anything holding me back?

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UNDERSTANDING SMART GOALS

SMART is a simple framework that helps make goals realistic and trackable:

- **Specific**
  - What exactly do I want to accomplish? Make it clear and focused

- **Measurable**
  - How will I know when it's achieved? Can progress be tracked?

- **Achievable**
  - Is this realistic in the time I have? Be realistic for the time and scope

- **Relevant**
  - Is this connected to my professional growth in aesthetic surgery? Does it align with your surgical training or career development?

- **Time-bound**
  - When do I want to complete it by? Is there a defined deadline or milestone?

Example SMART Goals for a Plastic Surgery Mentee:

Goal	SMART Breakdown
"Observe and review 3 rhinoplasty procedures by July 31- taking detailed notes on patient selection, intraoperative technique(s), and postoperative outcomes - and present a 5mins case analysis to my mentor."	**S**pecific: Rhinoplasty focus **M**easurable: 3 cases **A**chievable: Fits mentor's schedule **R**elevant: Surgical skill growth **T**ime-bound: By July 31.
"Draft and submit a clinical abstract to ISAPS Congress by October 15, with mentor feedback"	**S**pecific: Prepare an abstract on [your chosen topic] and submit it to the ISAPS Congress. **M**easurable: Abstract drafted, reviewed by mentor, revised, and submitted. **A**chievable: Meet bi-weekly with mentor from June through September to outline, draft, and refine. **R**elevant: Enhances academic profile and conference participation. **T**ime-bound: Final submission by October 15.
"Complete 3 pre-op consultation simulations and receive mentor feedback by September 30"	**S**pecific: Conduct three full simulated consultations with actors or colleagues playing patients. **M**easurable: Three separate simulation sessions logged, each followed by a feedback form from mentor. **A**chievable: Schedule one simulation every two weeks starting August 15, with mentor observing live or via recording. **R**elevant: Directly improves patient-communication skills essential to aesthetic practice. **T**ime-bound: All simulations and debriefs completed by September 30.

Example SMART Goals for a Plastic Surgery Mentee - Continued:

Goal	SMART Breakdown
"Shadow my mentor for one full surgical day and submit a reflection on time management and leadership styles by November 30"	**S**pecific: Observe mentor's peri-operative workflow and leadership during a complete surgery schedule. **M**easurable: One day of OR observation plus a written reflection (1–2 pages). **A**chievable: Arrange shadowing date by August 1, attend the session, then draft reflection. **R**elevant: Builds insight into efficient OR management and team leadership. **T**ime-bound: Shadowing by November 15 and reflection submitted by November 30.
"Co-author a case report with my mentor and submit it to a peer-reviewed journal by December 31."	**S**pecific: Write and submit one case report in collaboration with my mentor **M**easurable: Manuscript completed, approved by mentor, and submitted **A**chievable: We will meet bi-weekly to draft sections and review literature **R**elevant: Builds academic credentials and publication record **T**ime-bound: Submission by 31 Dec.

GOAL AREAS SPECIFIC TO PLASTIC SURGERY

You might focus on:

- Clinical Skills & Surgical Proficiency
  - E.g., Improve pre-operative marking techniques

- Patient Communication & Consultation
  - E.g., Learn to set realistic expectations and document consent

- Aesthetic Judgment & Planning
  - E.g., Review before-and-after cases to strengthen decision-making

- Practice Management & Professionalism
  - E.g., Understand steps for starting a private practice

- Ethics, Safety & Complications
    - E.g., Discuss management of complications through real case examples

- Leadership & Long-Term Career Development
    - E.g., Map out a 5-year plan for academic or clinic growth

- Research & Publishing
    - E.g., Submit abstract to ISAPS Congress

MENTOR AND MENTEE ROLES IN GOAL SETTING

Mentee's Role:

- Reflect on goals and complete the Goal-Setting Worksheet
- Share goals with mentor early
- Take ownership for tracking and revisiting goals

Mentor's Role:

- Help mentee refine goals using SMART principles
- Offer feedback and suggest realistic timelines
- Support progress and review goals regularly
- Celebrate successes and reflect on key learnings

TIPS FOR WRITING BETTER GOALS

- Start from a personal or professional "why"
    - "I want to feel more confident in facial surgery consultations."

- Be clear about the desired outcome. Focus on what you can control
    - "I want to create a pre-op checklist" (not "I want to be published in a journal")
    - "I want to improve my ability to explain risks clearly."

- Break large goals into smaller steps
    - Major: "Become confident in abdominoplasty planning"
    - Sub-goals: Observe, assist, review cases, create checklist, get feedback

- Set review dates for accountability
    - "Let's revisit this goal at our next meeting in 4 weeks."

ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP GOAL-SETTING SKILLS

Activity	Purpose	Who Leads
Initial Goal-Setting Workshop – Use the ISAPS worksheet together during the first or second meeting	Introduce SMART goals and align mentor/mentee expectations	Both
Mini-Milestone Check-In – Every 4–6 weeks, revisit goals together and adjust as needed	Keep the mentorship dynamic and responsive	Mentee
Progress Mapping – Mentee creates a visual map of goal steps and progress	Develop planning and tracking skills	Mentee
Case-Based Goal Design – Mentee identifies a recent clinical case and builds a learning goal around it (e.g., "improve marking technique for this procedure")	Link goals directly to practical experiences	Both
Goal Reflection Log – After completing a goal, mentee writes 3 lessons learned and how to apply them in future cases	Strengthen reflection and internalisation	Mentee

FINAL THOUGHTS

Goal setting isn't just paperwork - it's how mentoring becomes purposeful, how you turn your mentorship from good conversation into meaningful transformation.

Whether you're improving a surgical skill, preparing for private practice, or working on confidence, having clear goals will help you – and your mentor – get the most from this experience.

Tip: Don't forget to use the ISAPS Goal-Setting Worksheet to document your SMART goals. You can find this document in the Mentor Resource Library.