

Tips for Keeping Your New Year's Resolutions

How to Make Your Yearly Resolutions Stick



By, Kirsti A. Dyer MD, MS, FT, CWS – Columbia College

New Year is a time for new beginnings. These may include making resolutions. This year discover ways to help you make New Year's resolutions or goals that will stick. Many people use the start of a New Year as a reason to commit to change.

People have great hopes of changing what they do not like about themselves, yet within a couple of weeks after New Year, they have broken or given up on their New Year's Resolutions. One of the main reasons is because the goals that they set are too vague or too unrealistic. Goals like wanting to quickly lose 50 pounds, paying off credit card debt in a month, exercising 2 hours a day or suddenly start eating healthy foods all of the time may be difficult for people to achieve.

Quick Tips to Keep Healthy New Year's Resolutions

The key to keeping one's New Year's Resolutions involves picking a realistic goal, taking small steps towards that goal and learning to take slip ups in stride.

- Pick one thing that you want to change or set one goal that you want to accomplish.
- Take small steps, or make small changes every day to incorporate that change into your life.
- Be sure to congratulate yourself for making these small changes.
- Learn to take setbacks in stride and recommit to your goal.

Perhaps one of the best New Year's motivators is the quote by Chinese philosopher, Lao tzu who wisely said in *The Way of Lao-tzu*, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

Keys to Making a Successful Resolution

Many years ago researchers Miller and Marlatt at the University of Washington discovered there were key steps to making a successful resolution. These researchers discovered that people who were successful in keeping their resolutions:

- Had a strong initial commitment to make a change
- Had coping strategies to deal with problems that will come up
- Kept track of their progress

Miller and Marlatt discovered that the more monitoring a person does and the more feedback the person is getting about their progress, the better they will do. Another key element in making a successful resolution is the person's confidence that he or she is able to commit to making the change and then can change their behavior. They emphasized that "resolutions are a process, not a one-time effort that offer people a chance to create new habits."

Tips to Help You to Keep Your New Year's Resolutions

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) offers the following tips to help families and individuals keep their resolutions for a healthy mind and healthy life.

- *Don't make too many resolutions.* Pick a realistic, attainable goal with a reasonable time frame.
- *Choose your own resolution.* Make sure your goal is something that you want to accomplish for yourself and not just for friends or family.
- *Make a plan and write it down.* Plan what you'd like to accomplish in a certain period of time, like three months. Achieving small goals over time gives you a sense of accomplishment and motivation to keep going. Writing your goals down is a good way to keep track of your progress.
- *Involve friends and family.* They can support your efforts, and can motivate you to keep going.
- *If you get off track, forgive yourself.* Review your plan and make adjustments.
- *Congratulate yourself.* Reward yourself when your intermediate goals or resolutions are met.

Make Intentions or Set Goals Rather than Making Resolutions

Some people find the language they use to make their New Year's Resolutions may help them stay on track. Instead of referring to them as "resolutions" think of them as "goals" or even better "intentions" that you make to commit to change.

Most Important Point to Help Keep a New Year's Resolutions

The APA points out that a person needs to decide if they are truly ready and willing to make a life change. Simply deciding to make the change as part of a New Year's resolution is often not enough motivation to result in achieve the goal.

After deciding upon a resolution, come up with an action plan for achieving the goal. Consider listing the ways achieving the goal will help improve life. For many people keeping the eye on the prize, the top of the hill or a goal at the end will make it more likely to that they keep going.

The bottom line to keeping your New Year's Resolution involves:

- Setting a realistic goal or deciding on a realistic intention.
- Taking small steps daily towards that goal.
- Having a plan for dealing with missteps.
- Congratulate yourself for taking small steps and making small changes.

Good luck in making and keeping your New Year's Resolution, or New Year's Intention. Remember to take it one step at a time and you'll reach that goal.

Read more at Suite101: [Tips for Keeping Your New Year's Resolutions: How to Make Your Yearly Resolutions Stick this New Year](#)