



New Year, New You? Resolutions That Stick

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Many of us set goals each new year, only to become frustrated and self-critical when we find we have stumbled by Valentine's Day. Experts say there are several important steps we can take to avoid this.



Focus is about saying no.
— Steve Jobs



Focus on one thing. It is easy to come up with a long list of things we need to do to be our ideal selves: lose weight, drink less coffee, exercise more, declutter, start the day earlier, make the bed every day, walk 10,000 steps a day, and on and on. Experts suggest that choosing one, or maybe two, goals and focusing on those is more effective. Build toward your ideal self rather than identifying all the things you feel could be better or different and trying to do too much. Staying focused on one goal, celebrating the wins and addressing the stumbles is much easier and less overwhelming than tackling five to six big changes at once. Plus, we tend to be hardest on ourselves, so while striving to become our idea of ideal is always good, we probably don't have as much to do as we sometimes think. So, say "no" to all the other "woulda-couldas" and focus on one, or if you must, two things. After all, there's always next year.



Courage is fear holding on a minute longer.
— George S. Patton



Here are some tips to help you stick to your resolutions through 2021

Clear, straightforward and in writing seems to be the way to go. For some reason, written goals, and some experts even suggest written goals as a visual cue — like a mural or the inspiration quotes you see at the gym — are associated with achievement. Some may remember the quotes that seemed to inhabit every office in the 1990s and early 2000s. The simplicity of remembering something that can be captured in writing, along with the social commitment in sharing the goals in a visual way, seem to inspire achievement.

Next, give yourself a light at the end of the tunnel. Instead of promising yourself that you'll work out every day for the rest of your life, instead, consider a goal such as: For the next three months, I am going to work out every day or three times a week. Track your progress and set an appointment with yourself to check in and assess. Maybe you'll find after three months that working out every day is working for you and you can continue for another three months. Or, maybe you'll decide that instead of every day, three times a week is achievable. Set another appointment for yourself in another three months and reassess. That way, when you start to feel overwhelmed, you can say to yourself, just for today and the next three months, I am going to exercise every day; then you can recommit again.

Bring on the reinforcements. Spend time with people who excel at your desired habit. If exercise is your objective, connect with your friend who is always running marathons or doing IronMan competitions. If it's making changes to your diet, join a group on Facebook or start watching YouTubers who share recipes that support your diet. Building personal connections and making your new habit more social will help ensure it will stick.

Celebrate your successes. If you've developed checkpoints, maybe take those as an opportunity to assess and reward your success. And remember to focus on progress over perfection. You can reward yourself in a variety of ways, from splurging on something special you've been wanting; indulging in premium coffee, chocolate or wine; treating yourself to a spa service; or even spending time with your favorite person and asking them to celebrate with you.

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