

The Secrets to Keeping Your New Year's Resolutions

Coming hard on the heels of the party-hearty holidays, January 1st seems to be a natural time to start fresh. But is there any point? Psychologists say that many resolutions are broken before the day is out. The fact that we seem to make the same resolutions every year suggests that few of them stick. But even if you broke last year's (or every year's) resolutions, this year can be different. The first step is to pick your resolution carefully.

What Makes a Good Resolution?

1. Make Your Resolutions as Specific as Possible

Vague resolutions like "eat better" or "exercise more" are hard to quantify and, therefore, easy to fudge and, eventually, forget. You'll have a much better chance of succeeding with a specific, measurable goal like taking dog for one mile walk before dinner every night.

2. Choose a Goal that is Realistic but Meaningful

Don't underestimate the power of small changes-especially when you stick with them.

Grandiose plans to radically overhaul your diet on January 1st are usually doomed to failure. You'll get a lot more mileage out of choosing a couple of small but meaningful changes that you can stick to until they've become ingrained habits. For example, my friend Gerry, who needs to lose a couple of pounds, has decided she's going to start putting milk in her coffee rather than half and half.

That is a great resolution: It's specific and it's extremely doable. I think the odds are high that this time next year, Gerry will still be drinking milk in her coffee instead of half and half. And don't underestimate the power of small changes-especially when you stick with them. Over the course of the year, Gerry stands to save 18,250 calories, or the equivalent of five pounds, by

making this one small change.

3. Be Positive

By this, I don't mean "be optimistic" (although that never hurts!). Rather, I mean that it's easier to eliminate a bad habit when you replace it with a better one. So, if your resolution involves "no more candy bars at work," make "pack a healthy snack to take to work every day" part of the resolution.

What Are Some Good Diet Resolutions?

Here are a few ideas for small changes that can make a big difference in your health:

- Eat at least two servings of vegetables before 3pm each day
- Buy a MYZONE heart rate monitor and start tracking how successful your workouts are
- Eat fish at least once every week
- Make the TV room a "no food zone"
- Pack your own lunch at least twice a week

The 4 Secrets to Keeping Your Resolution

Once you've settled on one or two good resolutions, here are four strategies that can help you turn them into reality.

1. Keep a log--especially at the beginning. When you are trying to change habitual patterns, it can be very enlightening and helpful to keep a log of your daily activities. If you are trying to cut down on salt, keep track of how much you take in. If you want to get into the habit of exercising regularly, log your daily mileage or calories burned. If you are trying to stop out-of-control spending, write down everything you spend for a couple of weeks. If you have a smart-phone, there are all kinds of apps that make this fun and easy. If you don't, you'll find of lots of handy tools on the web. A pad and pencil work great, too.

2. Stay focused on your actions, not your progress. According to researchers at Yale University,

the trick to sticking to your resolutions is to stay focused on your commitment to a certain course of action (like eating healthier, spending less, or exercising more) and not pay too much attention to your results or progress toward a specific goal.

3. Find a support network. Research shows that support and encouragement from others with the same goals is a big help. Post your goals on the WWC Member Only page!

4. Go on record. To give your resolution a little extra staying power, share it with others. There's something about making your resolution public that makes it just a little harder to abandon.

