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DRIVERS

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How to Make (and Keep) a New Year's Resolution

Are you making a resolution for 2019? Warning: More than half of all resolutions fail, but this year, they don't have to be yours. Here's how to identify the right resolution to improve your life, create a plan on how to reach it, and become part of the small group of people that successfully achieve their goal.



Pick the Right Resolution

You'll give yourself your best shot at success if you set a goal that's doable — and meaningful too.

According to the time management firm FranklinCovey, one third of resolutions don't make it past the end of January. A lot of these resolutions fail because they're not the right resolutions. And a resolution may be wrong for one of three main reasons:

- It's a resolution created based on what someone else (or society) is telling you to change.
- It's too vague.
- You don't have a realistic plan for achieving your resolution.

Your goals should be smart - and SMART. That's an acronym coined in the *Journal of Management Review* in 1981 for "specific", "measurable", "achievable", "relevant" and "time-bound". It works for management, and it can also work in setting your resolutions, too.

- **Specific.** Your resolution should be absolutely clear. "Making a concrete goal is really important rather than just vaguely saying 'I want to lose weight.' You want to have a goal: How much weight do you want to lose and at what time interval?" said Katherine L. Milkman, an associate professor of operations information and decisions at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. "Five pounds in the next two months —

that's going to be more effective."

- **Measurable.** This may seem obvious if your goal is a fitness or weight loss related one, but it's also important if you're trying to cut back on something, too. If, for example, you want to stop biting your nails, take pictures of your nails over time so you can track your progress in how those nails grow back out, said Jeffrey Gardere, a psychologist and professor at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine. Logging progress into a journal or making notes on your phone or in an app designed to help you track behaviors can reinforce the progress, no matter what your resolution may be.
- **Achievable.** This doesn't mean that you can't have big stretch goals. But trying to take too big a step too fast can leave you frustrated, or affect other areas of your life to the point that your resolution takes over your life — and you, your friends, and family flail. So, for example, resolving to save enough money to retire in five years when you're 30 years old is probably not realistic, but saving an extra \$100 a month may be.
- **Relevant.** Is this a goal that really matters to you, and are you making it for the right reasons? "If you do it out of the sense of self-hate or remorse or a strong passion in that moment, it doesn't usually last long," said Dr. Michael Bennett, a psychiatrist and co-author of two self-help books. "But if you build up a process where you're thinking harder about what's good for you, you're changing the structure of your life, you're bringing people into your life who will reinforce that resolution, then I think you have a fighting chance."
- **Time-bound.** Like "achievable," the timeline toward reaching your goal should be realistic, too. That means giving yourself enough time to do it with lots of smaller intermediate goals set up along the way. "Focus on these small wins so you can make gradual progress," Charles Duhigg, author of "The Power of Habit" and a former New York Times writer, said, "If you're building a habit, you're planning for the next decade, not the next couple of months."

Create Your Plan

Since you won't just wake up and change your life, you not

only need a plan for what to do, but also for what roadblocks you'll come across along the way.

If you're trying to form or break a habit, Mr. Duhigg suggests breaking down that habit into its three parts: a cue, a routine and a reward.

Some example:

Bad Habit: I check Twitter too often.

Cue: I feel isolated.

Routine: I check Twitter.

Reward: I feel connected.

Way to change the behavior: Instead of checking Twitter talk to a colleague.

Bad Habit: I smoke.

Cue: I'm tired.

Routine: I smoke a cigarette.

Reward: I'm stimulated.

Way to change the behavior: Instead of smoking a cigarette, replace the stimulus with something else, like going for a walk.

Bad Habit: I don't get enough sleep at night.

Cue: I feel like I need time to myself in the evening.

Routine: I stay up too late watching TV.

Reward: I'm entertained.

Way to change the behavior: Instead of staying up late to watch TV, carve out special time each day to spend by yourself, even if that may mean asking for help with your children or taking a break from work each day.

Make it Personal

Of course, the cue and routine for a common bad habit, like smoking, is as individual as the person trying to quit. You may need to do some work to figure out what the real cue for the habit you want to change is, and then what will replace it.

Both the cue and reward should be easy and obvious. Let's look at one example in depth. For running, a cue could be just putting on your running clothes, even if at first you don't do anything after that. "Oftentimes when people have never exercised before, and researchers are working with them to get them to exercise, the first week is: You should just put on your running clothes. Don't even leave the house," Mr. Duhigg said. Then add the first step in the new routine: Put on running clothes, walk around the block. "You want to create an environment where you're making very slow progress that is guaranteed to deliver victories to you," he said.

The reward at the end of the action must be an actual reward, too, so that it reinforces the routine and makes you want to do it. "Otherwise your brain won't latch onto the behavior," Mr. Duhigg said.

For example, if you run in the morning then rush through

your shower and your commute, you might end up at your desk sweaty, so in effect "you're punishing yourself for running," he said. Your brain will pick up on that punishment and push back against the intended activity. Your resolution didn't necessarily fail because you failed, but because you were trying to do it at the wrong time, which resulted in a punishment instead of a reward at the end. For running, a reward can be a nice long shower, a piece of chocolate or indulging in a feeling of pride, which can be reinforced by tracking your running in a journal and writing that down.

While your plan should be realistic and encouraging, it should also allow for inevitable hurdles that are going to crop up. Pauline Wallin, a psychologist and author of "Taming Your Inner Brat," said any resolution plan should include room for mistakes. "You're there for the long haul. You have to expect slip ups," she said. "There will be times when you will say, 'I'll make a mess of things and I'm just going to start again tomorrow.' Don't berate yourself. Focus on what you're doing good for yourself rather than what mistake you made," she said.

Leap Over Resolution Hurdles

No one's perfect, and your quest for your resolution won't be either. But you can get back on track.

What's the best way to tackle problems that arise on your way to success? First, remember no matter how well you plan, change is hard. "You're up against a part of yourself that's never going to change. It's always going to push at you in certain directions that are unhealthy. You're going to have to really create something step by step in order to manage it," Dr. Bennett said.

Before hurdles get in your way, make sure you have a plan to jump over them. Here are a few common problems people face in achieving their goals:

It's too much and I have so far to go. A perceived lack of progress can be frustrating. Dr. Wallin suggests focusing on whatever the smaller number it is: your progress, or how much you have left to do.

This "small number" technique is based on a 2012 study published in The Journal of Consumer Research that found that focusing on the smaller number in reaching a goal kept people more motivated. So, for example, if you want to run five miles, which of the following thoughts is more likely to keep you going?

- I've already run one mile and in another mile I'll double it
- I've run just one mile and I still have four more to go

According to this theory, you're likely better off with the first one.

So when you are first starting on your journey toward your resolution, instead of looking at the big number left to get

there, look at what you've already achieved. Toward the end when that goal number shrinks, it's perfectly fine to look at your progress, but zero in on what little remains before you hit your goal.

I'm trying to stay positive, but it's not working. Positive thinking isn't going to be enough, said Gabriele Oettingen, a professor of psychology at New York University and author of "Rethinking Positive Thinking: Inside the New Science of Motivation." In fact, positive thinking may be the thing holding you back.

In her studies, she's found that the more positively people fantasize and daydream about their future success, the less well they do in terms of having actual success. "They already experienced it positively in their minds, and then they relax," she said.

A better technique than positive thinking? **Try to be positive, but realistic.** Yes, imagine the goal or positive fantasy, but then look at what obstacles are in the way and how to get

over them. Dr. Oettingen calls this technique W.O.O.P. — Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan.

- **Wish:** What do you want?
- **Outcome:** What would the ideal outcome be? What will your life look like when you hit your goal?
- **Obstacle:** You know yourself. What will try to stop you? What has sidelined you before?
- **Plan:** How will you get around it?

Answering these questions doesn't need to take a lot of time. Dr. Oettingen suggests three to five minutes to start; make sure you're in a place where you won't be interrupted.

Just remember, you don't need to do it alone, especially if your resolution starts in the new year when you'll have plenty of company in trying to make a lift change.

*Article reprinted from <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/smarterliving/resolution-ideas>
By Jen A. Miller*

If You Miss Your Goal

You didn't fail. You're your own experiment, so here's what to try on your second, third or 20th attempt.

First and foremost: If you fail at your resolution attempt, don't beat yourself up, and know you're not alone. After all, Dr. Milkman points out, "we struggle to do the things that we know are good for us because we give into impulses for instant gratification."

Feel Free to Start Fresh

Want to try again? Remember, a resolution doesn't need to be tied to New Year's. "It can be following a weekend, following a birthday," she said. So if you missed your New Year's goal, you can start again tomorrow, on a Monday, after Valentine's Day or any marker that means something to you, just as long as you're ready to give it another go. It won't guarantee success, but you don't need to wait until another year comes around on the calendar to give it another go.

And be kind to yourself. "We talk in much harsher tones to ourselves than we would to other people," said Dr. Wallin. "We wouldn't say to a kid trying to learn something 'that's so stupid' but that's how we talk to ourselves."

When resolutions run off the rails or fall apart but you still want to try again, talk to yourself like "a child who's feeling discouraged. You wouldn't say 'that's because you're an idiot.' You would say 'come on you can do it.'"

Dr. Wallin offered a few more common self-put downs, and ways to flip the script:

- Instead of "I blew it. What's the point now?"
...say, "That was a bad decision, but a good learning opportunity. What's my next step?"
- Instead of, "I'm SO hungry!"
...say, "I'm hungry, which means it's working! It's a bit uncomfortable, but I've gotten through worse."
- Instead of, "My legs are SO sore. I can't possibly work out today"
...say, "Let's give my leg muscles a rest today. What can I do to work my arms?"
or: "Of course my muscles are sore. They're supposed to be. It will get easier."
- Instead of, "This is too hard!"
...say, "Making it through today is going to really build my confidence."



How to Pick the Best Cereal for Your Weight Loss Goals

When faced with a hectic morning, the easiest path to breakfast often includes a cereal box. Open. Pour. Add milk. Eat. But, when it comes to nutrition, the choices in the cereal aisle don't stack up evenly. Varieties with chocolate chips and marshmallows likely stand out as the healthier of choices, but seemingly healthy options, such as some granolas and sweetened whole-grain varieties, can be packed with added sugars and unhealthy fats, too — not to mention they can be seriously lacking in good-for-you nutrients.

“Never judge a cereal by the front of the box; the manufacturers aren't there to help you be healthy,” says Gretchen Spetz, RD, a clinical dietitian with University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center in Ohio. To get the real scoop, you need to scan the ingredients and nutrition facts label for sneaky sugar sources and hidden processed ingredients. What you do want to see are ingredients like whole grains, oats, whole wheat, and brown rice, which tend to be higher in fiber than more processed carbohydrates.

The good news is that the right cereal pick made with the right ingredients can serve up a healthy, nutrient-rich breakfast in a flash — and yes, help you meet your weight loss or weight maintenance goals.

To make the right decision when it comes to your breakfast bowl, Spetz recommends looking for cereals with at least 3 grams (g) of fiber (5 g or more is considered “high-fiber”), less than 10 g of sugar, and less than 200 milligrams (mg) of salt per serving.

Examples include:

- Kashi 7 Whole Grain Nuggets
- Kellogg's Bite Size Unfrosted Mini-Wheats
- Kashi GoLean
- Kellogg's All-Bran
- Post Shredded Wheat 'n Bran
- General Mills Cheerios
- General Mills Fiber One Original

Article reprinted from www.everydayhealth.com

Keeping a Healthy Body Weight



Maintaining your ideal body weight is tough, no matter where you are in your weight loss journey. Use these tips to set yourself up for success.

This means higher risk for many serious health problems, including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes.

If you're overweight, losing even a few pounds can improve your health, so every step in the right direction counts!

When your weight is in a healthy range:

- Your body more efficiently circulates blood.
- Your fluid levels are more easily managed.
- You are less likely to develop diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers, gallstones, osteoarthritis, breathing problems and sleep apnea.
- You may feel better about yourself and have more energy to make other positive health changes.

Losing weight isn't easy, but there's no doubt it's worth it. It sounds simple enough - To lose weight, you need to burn more calories than you eat. And to stay at a healthy weight, you need to balance healthy eating and physical activity. Most fad diets and quick weight loss schemes don't work, because they don't help you learn how to maintain a healthy weight over the long haul.

There's no "secret" to success, but there are a few basic steps to losing weight you can take.

Keeping the Weight Off

OK, you've lost some weight. Now you can relax, right? Not so fast! Maintaining weight loss can take just as much effort as losing it. Here are some tips:

- **Know your triggers**, roadblocks and favorite excuses. We all have them!
- **Don't kid yourself** This is a long-term effort. The first year or two after significant weight loss may be the hardest, but if you can stick it out you're more likely to make it in the long run.
- **Learn from others** who've succeeded and follow their example.
- **Make sure you have a social support network** of friends, family and health professionals who will support your new healthy habits.

- **Find healthy ways to motivate** yourself to stick with it.
- **At the end of the day**, it's up to you. Hold yourself accountable for the decisions you make.
- **And remember**, you can't do it by diet alone. For people trying to keep weight off, exercise is even more essential. The American Heart Association recommends 200 to 300 minutes of physical activity a week to keep those extra pounds from creeping back.

Lapsing and Relapsing

A lapse is a small mistake or slip into old habits. This can happen when you have a bad day and overeat or skip your workout. A relapse is when you go back to old habits for several days or weeks.

Remember that having a lapse or relapse is not failing. You can get back on track. Try to find new, healthier ways to handle life's stresses besides overeating or becoming one with your couch. Take a walk, talk with a friend, or do something to help someone else. Just don't give up!

Article reprinted from www.heart.org

5 Steps to Lose Weight and Keep It Off

Learning to balance healthy eating and physical activity can help you lose weight more easily and keep it off.

Take it from people who have successfully maintained weight loss:

- 98% have modified their eating habits.
- 94% have increased their physical activity, especially walking.

Source: National Weight Control Registry

- 1. Set realistic goals.** Know where you are today so you know how to get where you want to be. Learn your Body Mass Index (BMI). Set yourself up for success with short-term goals, like “I will make lifestyle changes which will help me lose (and keep off) 3-5% of my body weight.” Short-term goals can seem more achievable and keep you on track toward your long-term goals.
- 2. Understand how much and why you eat.** Use a food diary or tracking app to understand what, how much, and when you’re eating. Being mindful of your eating habits and aware of your roadblocks and excuses can help you get real about your goals.
- 3. Manage portion sizes.** It’s easy to overeat when you’re served too much food. Smaller portions can help prevent eating too much. Learn the difference between a portion and a serving and how to keep portions reasonable.
- 4. Make smart choices.** You don’t have to give up all your favorite foods. Learn to make smart food choices and simple substitutions instead. Discover healthy snacks and how fruits, vegetables, and whole grains help keep you fuller longer.
- 5. Be physically active.** Physical activity is anything that gets your heart rate up, like walking. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity a week. Move more, with more intensity, and sit less.

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Articles are not intended to provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Consult your doctor before starting any exercise program.