

New Year's Resolutions

Set Them and Stick To Them

With the start of a new year, many people decide to make changes in their lives. Steps toward a “new” direction are a wonderful way to ring in the new year. Some people will be fortunate to reach their goals. Others may struggle a bit along the way, if not give up completely.

Don't be that person that is unsuccessful in reaching their New Year's Resolutions! This year, try something a bit different.

Instead of going “all out” or “giving it up completely,” try small attainable goals. If you decide to add exercise to your busy routine, start walking in your neighborhood two or three days a week. If you decide to quit smoking, reduce the number of cigarettes in stages, instead of quitting cold.

Remember the goal: Improve your self health and well-being.

A small change is positive all by itself. Acknowledging small moves in the right direction instills confidence and makes further movement in the same direction likely.

Also, don't beat yourself up if you slip. This is part of the change process. Look at these mishaps as learning opportunities, chalk them up to experience, and get back on your plan.

Some other helpful tips:

- **Be specific in your goals.** Setting a loose goal for yourself such as “I want to be less lazy” doesn't give you much in the way of motivation or direction.

Tell yourself, “I will exercise three times a week” or “I will watch two hours less of television each day.” You will be more apt to reach a goal if you know specifically what it is you are trying to achieve.

- **Don't keep it a secret.** Recruit your family, friends, and co-workers in your efforts. Their support and reassurance will go a long way as well as respecting your efforts.
- **Avoid triggers.** Early in your change efforts, many things may trigger interest in resuming the habit. You must be mindful to avoid these as much as possible during the first few weeks. Think about your actions as you go through your day. Ask yourself if your current decision is placing you closer to the decision to engage in the habit you are trying to break.
- **Respect your “bad habit.”** Habits don't develop in a vacuum. They serve functions: to reduce stress, make tasks feel easier, enhance socialization. You can't just give up a bad habit, especially if it has endured for a long period of time, without understanding the value of your habit and considering methods for replacing it with something healthy.
- **Take up new passions.** Giving up a bad habit can be a perfect time to take up a good one. Perhaps it is time to learn how to play golf, enroll in a ballet class, or play the guitar. If your habit has served as a primary method of pleasure, you need to develop new ones, or rekindle old ones. Otherwise your life will feel like it is lacking something.

It seems everyone has at least one resolution for the New Year, and they are proud to share it when asked about them. Among these goals, there are some you find more common than others.

Most Common New Year's Resolutions

- ✓ Losing weight
- ✓ Exercising more
- ✓ Quitting smoking
- ✓ Managing debt
- ✓ Saving money
- ✓ Getting a better job/education
- ✓ Reducing stress
- ✓ Taking a trip/vacation
- ✓ Volunteering more
- ✓ Getting organized
- ✓ Spending more time with family/friends

New passions will also serve as distraction during those first days and weeks when urges to engage in the bad habit are strong.

The only person standing in your way of reaching your goals is **you!**

You can do it!

If you or someone you know is having a problem, contact MHNNet—help is available!

Source: Life Advantages, Parlay International