

New Year's Goal Setting Tips

Beginning a new year is such a hopeful time. Whether we break out an unblemished calendar or merely scroll over to the month of January on our smart phones, there's the sense of being given a fresh start every January 1st. We make notes, either mentally or on paper, of New Year's resolutions we're determined to accomplish. Yet, all too often, we stumble over the first steps of change and quietly retreat to old, unhealthy habits.

1. Write goals down and review them periodically

Resolutions that aren't written down are destined to fail quickly. So write them out, and not just anywhere. Keep your list of New Year's goals in a place where you will see them regularly, so you can review your progress and recommit on a consistent basis.

Ideas:

- Tape your goals to your bathroom mirror where you'll see them first and last thing every day.
- For goals that require some accountability for success, affix them to your fridge. Just make sure they're ones you don't mind your kids asking about because ask they will.
- Take a photo of your resolutions and post them as your computer screensaver or as your smart phone wallpaper.

2. Create goals for different areas of your life

Sure, you may be most concerned that you get your finances in order, but how about those other areas of life? If you set one or two goals in each of them, you're bound to see a ripple effect in every area.

Ideas:

- Relationship goals
- Work goals
- Spiritual goals
- Health and Fitness goals
- Finance goals

3. Set goals that are realistic and attainable

While it would be great to lose 30 pounds, get out of debt, and get a new job that pays twice your salary in the coming New Year, you do want to make sure that any resolutions you set are ones you can accomplish in twelve months. So instead of setting a huge goal that involves lots of steps, work on framing your resolutions as smaller goals that can be accomplished reasonably.

Ideas:

- I will replace my nighttime snack of a bowl of ice cream with sugar free pudding.
- I will pay \$25 a week towards my smallest debt.
- I will revise my resume and then begin to look online for available jobs in my skill set.

4. Make goals that are measurable

In order to stick to your New Year's resolutions, you need to be able to see consistently that you're on the right track. The best way to do that is to set goals that can be measured again and again over short periods of time.

Ideas:

- I'll sit at the table with my children for breakfast at least five mornings a week. Instead of, I'll make more time for my family.
- I'll invite one friend out for coffee every other Wednesday evening. Instead of, I'll be better at keeping in touch with friends.
- I'll straighten the house for 15 minutes every day after dinner. Instead of I'll keep my house cleaner.

5. Design goals that can be accomplished with a partner

What are the main reasons New Year's resolutions are so hard to fulfill? They're hard work and no one tends to notice if you give up on them! So go ahead and change that by teaming up with a friend or spouse to accomplish a goal together. You're bound to have more fun when you're working together, and you won't be so tempted to give up if someone else is counting on you.

Ideas:

- Sign up for a fitness challenge at your local health club with a friend or group of friends.
- Swap off nights with your husband to check your kids' homework or read aloud to them from a favorite book.
- Agree to teach a Sunday school class with your best friend.

6. Reward yourself for achieving your goals

Finally, the pay off! You'll be much more inclined to set resolutions next year if you can remember the thrill and the reward of accomplishing goals this year. Just make sure that your reward doesn't make it harder to accomplish any of your other goals. So if you're trying to cut back on debt, don't reward yourself for losing weight with a trip to Jamaica!

Ideas:

- Treat yourself to a girls' movie night out after you accomplish that fitness challenge.
- Take a nap on a weekend afternoon each week you accomplish a specific number of goals.
- Allocate a few dollars more to savings each week you pay down a debt, and do something fun with the savings when the debt is paid off.

Be **S.M.A.R.T.**

When it comes to goal setting be **S.M.A.R.T.** about it.

S –specific

M – measureable

A – attainable

R – realistic

T – timely matter

Too often, people set goals that are vague or unrealistic. Not only does this lead to frustration, but it also decreases the likelihood of actually achieving the goal. The **S.M.A.R.T.** method can be applied to a variety of goals, whether professional or personal, giving you the tools you need to succeed in your goal setting endeavors.

For example, if your **S.M.A.R.T.** goal is to lose weight in the New Year, stating that you are going to lose weight isn't enough. It needs to be something *you* want to do, not someone else. The goal needs to be something achievable that week. Goals need to be action specific. It will answer *what, how much, when and how often?* Finally, when setting your goal, ask yourself if you feel like you can accomplish this goal with a confidence level of 7/10 or 70%

You need to be **specific** – I am going to increase my vegetable intake by eating 1 cup of fresh vegetables 3 out of 7 Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Is it **measurable?** Yes, it is 1 cup of fresh veggies. Is it **attainable?** Yes, Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday are attainable. Is it **realistic?** Yes, eating 1 cup of fresh veggies 3/7 days a week is realistic. **Timely** – 3 out of 7 days is within a timely manner.