

Give Those New Year's Resolutions A Second Chance

from the American Counseling Association

Okay, so you've already broken most, if not all, of those New Year's resolutions you made. So what? There's no law that says you only get one chance and that it only can happen on January 1st. In fact, waiting until after the activities and tensions of the holidays end can often make change easier.

So how about giving this year's New Year's resolutions a second chance but doing it in a way that will help you to succeed?

Start by being realistic. Expecting giant lifestyle changes to happen quickly or easily is not being practical.

Our bad habits usually came about in small increments over a long period of time. That usually means changing them will also take time and probably will happen in small units. You're not going to lose that 35 pounds next week, but you might lose 4 or 5 pounds next month.

In some ways, changing habits or behaviors is similar to undertaking a home remodeling project. You need to start by accepting three basic things:

- It's going to take longer than you hoped.
- It's going to be more difficult than you expected.
- It may even take more than one try to reach your goal.

Accepting these concepts can give you a solid, realistic foundation from which to plan and take actions that will bring success.

A good first step is to forget rigid time deadlines and instead set achievable mini-goals that will eventually lead to your final goal. You probably can't stop smoking tomorrow, but today you can make an appointment to talk to your doctor or check out the local hospital's smoking cessation program.

For weight loss, it's easy to feel depressed and like a failure when you don't drop that five pounds in week one, or when you slip up and eat that big dessert. So instead, set smaller, easier-to-achieve goals. Maybe it's just skipping that morning donut this week. Next week, perhaps it's adding a daily walk after dinner.

Most important is not giving up. Yes, you will make mistakes. Yes, you might even fail one or more times. Studies report losing weight often takes several tries, and quitting smoking as many as eight attempts.

Just accept that you're human and fallible, but also capable of giving it another go. Try again, and you just might have one less resolution to make next New Year's.

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