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"New Year Resolutions for a New You"

Resolutions and How to Keep Them

by Kimberly Blaker

Have you been putting off your search for a better paying job? Is taking time out for yourself always on the back burner? Are you junk food junkie?

The New Year is just around the corner. What better time to take inventory, set some goals, and take control of your life? But, if you're like most, *making* resolutions is much easier than following through.

Before you decide on this year's resolutions, make a plan of action so your resolutions will be doable. Start by making a list of the goals you'd like to achieve then set your strategy for accomplishing them.

Resolutions: Why they fail and how to succeed

The hardest part of resolutions is keeping them. At first, sticking to those promises is easy. But as the newness wears off and the year progresses, it's easy to revert to your normal ways. Therefore, part of making resolutions is creating a plan to help you succeed.

The first step is to make resolutions to which you feel devoted. If you resolve to lose weight, spend more time with your family, quit smoking, and take vitamins, you're not likely to succeed at those to which you don't feel committed.

Once you fail at the resolutions that you don't feel strongly about, it's easy to slip up on the ones for which you truly care. So, be selective, and don't give yourself too many changes at once. There'll be plenty of New Years to come.

Another reason for failure in keeping resolutions is that sometimes they're made more for the benefit of others or because of being pestered. If you decide to quit smoking just to get your husband off your back, you're less likely to succeed. Solid reasons that are a benefit to you are more likely to hold you to your promise when temptation sets in.

Make sure you have a clear plan for achieving your goals. Put your resolution in writing, and detail the steps to achieve your new goals. If your resolution requires a schedule such as an exercise routine, a new diet or steps toward completing your education, create a goal chart, a detailed plan, and a checklist to track your progress.

Also post notes in strategic places such as the refrigerator, bathroom mirror, or steering wheel to remind you of your goals and how to overcome temptation.

Make sure your family understands the importance of your resolutions. Lack of family support can lead to breaking resolutions. If it's something your family has been nagging you about, tell them you need encouragement but that continued harassment could undermine your resolve. Determine how each family member can help you to achieve your goal whether by taking on additional household chores or by giving you praise for continued success.

Adjust your environment to enable you to succeed. If eating healthier is your goal, don't fill the cupboards with junk food for everyone else in your home. Find healthy snacks they'd be willing to substitute. If you're trying to quit smoking, avoid people, places, and things that remind or tempt you until you have it under control.

Don't go it alone. If you have a friend with similar desires, make a pact. Work together to create a plan and then check in with each other regularly for encouragement, praise, and support. If you resolved to get more exercise, do it together. Having a commitment and someone to accompany you will go a long way in helping you to succeed.

Finally, reward yourself, not only once you've achieved your goal but periodically for taking steps toward achieving it or for just sticking to it. Small, periodic rewards can be enough to keep you motivated when you're ready to throw in the towel.

Resolutions for a better you: ideas to get you started.

Eating a healthier diet tops many women's lists. Lowering fat and cholesterol intake, reducing calories, and eliminating food additives are a few ways you can improve your diet.

Getting regular exercise either for weight loss or healthier living is a longtime favorite. Besides aerobics, walking, or biking you could choose a fun, recreational activity such as martial arts, roller blading, dance classes, or even golf, providing you walk the course.

If furthering your education is a goal that you'd like to achieve, with today's online and correspondence courses there's no reason you can't do it. Look into one of the

many accredited colleges and universities around the country now offering independent study courses or degrees.

Are you ready for a career change? Maybe you want a promotion, better pay, or a career that’s better suited to you. Whatever the case, with diligence and ingenuity you can land the job that’s right for you.

Everyone has a bad habit or two, whether it’s smoking, drinking, criticizing, or watching too much television. Take inventory of your habits and decide which you’d most like to do without.

Do you give too much of your time to your family, career, and volunteering and never take time for yourself? Then give yourself a break and take up a new hobby, plan regular dates with your friends, or just relax.

Do you want to give your home a new look? What better time to set a course of action for making your house your dream home?

Remember, whatever New Year resolutions you choose, success awaits you if you truly desire to succeed.

The End

Pull Quote: At first, sticking to those promises is easy.

Pull Quote: Having a commitment and someone to accompany you will go a long way in helping you to succeed.

SIDEBAR IDEAS OR WAYS TO LOCALIZE: Ways to reward yourself or a quote or suggestion by a local therapist.

Bio: Kimberly Blaker is an author and freelance writer from Michigan. Her articles have appeared in more than 100 publications around the country.

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