

How to keep your New Year's resolution

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Having trouble keeping your New Year's resolution? You're not alone. Researchers have determined that approximately 8% of people who make New Year's resolutions actually keep them. Most quit for various reasons. Either they tried to do it alone, made too lofty of a goal, gave up too easily, didn't efficiently manage their time to accommodate it, let it become a financial burden, had no real plan of execution, were dishonest about it, had the wrong perspective about it, or did not believe in themselves.

Behavioral psychologist Dr. Paul Marciano, author of *Carrots and Sticks Don't Work*, gives the following advice to modify your behavior and motivation to allow you to keep your New Year's resolution:

Clearly define your goals. Many people say they'll do something but don't declare to what extent they'll do it. Think of the acronym SMART when creating goals. Your goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Additionally, be sure your goals are realistic. They

should be within a reasonable reach or you most likely won't achieve them and will end up feeling like a failure.

Track your progress. "If you can measure it, you can change it" is a fundamental principle of psychology. These measurements will/should help motivate you as you reflect on where you started and where you are. They also can help you adjust your efforts during periods of "sticking points."

Be patient. Progress is not always steady. There will be peaks and valleys, rapid gains and resistance. Sometimes progress occurs quickly then slows down or starts slowly then rapidly picks up with gigantic breakthroughs.

Publicize your goals. Maybe it'll make you feel a little vulnerable but announcing your New Year's resolution to the rest of the world can help you hold yourself accountable as well as gain social support from family and friends.

Put it on your schedule. This allows you to make time to properly engage with it. And it forces you to give your resolution some degree of priority in your daily or weekly activities.

Don't fall into the "all or nothing" trap. If you slip a little, don't slip

entirely. If you cheated on your diet last night, don't resign yourself to starting over again next week. It's still better to do something than nothing. If you're supposed to walk on the treadmill for an hour a day and something came up that derailed your schedule, still walk 20 minutes if you can instead of skipping the walk all together.

If you slip up, get up. The legendary football coach Vince Lombardi would always tell people: "It isn't whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get back up." With New Year's resolutions, resiliency is the key to success. Don't turn relapses or temporary failures into total meltdowns or excuses for giving up. Instead, just acknowledge the mistake and recommit yourself to staying the course.

Dr. Marciano firmly believes that achieving our goals isn't about willpower. It's about developing the right skills and strategies that, with patience, will lead to success. So keep his advice in mind and you'll join the elite 8% who will celebrate the success of achieving their New Year's resolution.

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