



A happier, healthier you starts with setting realistic goals for the year ahead.

MAKE 2015 *your best year ever!*

Thinking about writing your New Year's resolution list? Not sure you can achieve them all? Of course you can! Read on for our expert tips on making your goals come true.

On average, only 12 per cent of people succeed at their resolutions. So, what makes a good resolution? It needs to be SMART – that is, Specific; Measurable; Attainable; Realistic; Timely. “Great resolutions stem from ‘intrinsic motivation,’” says psychologist Dr Jeremy Adams. “Intrinsic motivation means your goals are aligned with your values and you believe in what you’re doing. A resolution is only useful if it’s genuine, if you act on it, and if you turn it into a habit.” Here are a few smart steps to get you started.

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SMART LITTLE TIPS FOR SETTING REALISTIC SOLUTIONS

- 1 Follow the SMART strategy (see above).
- 2 Break your resolutions down into small steps that include short-term, medium-term and long-term goals.
- 3 Make sure your resolution fits your lifestyle, emotions, financial situation and physical ability.
- 4 Ask yourself why you want to meet this goal. Why is it important to you, and how does it align with your values?
- 5 Gather supporters to help you achieve your resolution.
- 6 Plan for potential slip-ups.
- 7 Think about what you want more of in life – not less. For example, it’s better to think about gaining improved health rather than losing more weight.
- 8 Turn your resolution actions into habits by being consistent and doing them regularly.
- 9 Swap ‘should’ for ‘could’. ‘Should’ sounds like a chore, while ‘could’ suggests possibilities.
- 10 Celebrate your successes!

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME TO MAKE A RESOLUTION

“The best time to make a resolution is when you’re feeling capable,” says Dr Adams. “Look at your life and assess whether you’re able to make a change now. Are there small actions you can take? If there are, act now. And remember, you don’t have to go it alone – share your intentions with friends and family who will support you, and don’t be afraid to ask for help when you need it.” Research shows that if you share your goals, your chances of achieving them increase by 33 per cent. Want to up your odds even further? Here’s a cool idea: Promise or Pay (promiseorpay.com) is a website that helps you stick to your goal or else donate to a charity. And with cash on the line, you can increase your goal success by 72 per cent.

Whether you make your resolutions in January or June, it’s okay if you don’t initially succeed. “Just keep at it. Try again the next month, and the next, learning from what worked and what didn’t. The ultimate aim is to feel a little healthier each day,” says exercise physiologist Professor Steve Selig.



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EMBRACE MINDFULNESS

Have you ever set a resolution that relies on willpower alone, like telling yourself you’ll never eat chocolate again? “If we rely solely on willpower, there’s a real chance our resolutions won’t stick,” says Dr Adams. Instead, give yourself permission to enjoy your favourite treat foods now and then, and adopt mindfulness to deal with urges. “Start by acknowledging your urge to eat chocolate, for example. Then, rather than act on it, do something else, like fill up your water bottle or eat a piece of fruit,” says Dr Adams. Or, decide to have the chocolate, enjoy it, track it and move on. By practising mindfulness, you’ll start to become more aware of your trigger moments and become better at managing them, too.

ACCEPT THE SETBACKS, THEN MOVE ON

“Ideally, we’d like to avoid setbacks, but they happen,” says psychologist Dr Elizabeth Celi. “Don’t be hard on yourself – there’s no value there. Instead, view setbacks as valuable lessons. Yes, they can be disappointing, but they give you a chance to reconnect with your end goal and reassess your stepping stones to get there.”

It helps to remember you’re human, too! “We’re bound to slip up, and we’ll never be perfect – that’s completely unrealistic. We have to do the best we can in an imperfect world,” says accredited practising dietitian Kate Gudorf. And the best way to do that? “Be consistent and get back on track immediately – without beating yourself up about it,” she says.

Also try to prepare for setbacks to help you reach your goals. “Think about setbacks you’ve experienced before or anticipate in the future,” says Professor Selig. “Write these down then write a potential solution for each one. So, when an obstacle pops up, you’ll have a plan to help overcome it.” ➤



RESOLUTION MAKEOVER

It's out with the old and in with the new! Here, five hard-to-achieve resolutions get a realistic revamp.



X THE OLD I'm going to lose 10kg in 10 weeks While this is a great goal for anyone who has 10kg to lose, you'll be more likely to succeed if you put a plan of action in place for each of the 10 weeks to help you get there. "Any A-to-B strategy that lacks the 'how' is more likely to fail than a plan that incorporates smaller steps that'll help you achieve it," says Dr Celi.

✓ THE NEW I'm going to make specific changes to my diet and exercise habits to support a healthy life Start by adding 30 minutes of movement into your day, or focus on eating more **Filling & Healthy foods**, and you'll be well on your way. "An A-to-E strategy that incorporates tangible short-term and mid-term goals is much more likely to see you reach that long-term goal," says Dr Celi.

X THE OLD I'm never going to eat chocolate again "All-or-nothing thinking sets us up for failure," says Gudorf. "It isn't sustainable, so it's unlikely to work long-term. We need to learn how to enjoy our favourite indulgences in moderation."

✓ THE NEW I'll have a small, portion-controlled piece of chocolate four days a week "This is far more realistic - it involves a good strategy of setting up an amount and frequency that can fit into your lifestyle healthily, and allows you to keep enjoying the things you love," says Gudorf.

X THE OLD I'm going to join a gym and go every day (even though I've never been before) "This kind of resolution leaves no room for error, so it's likely you'll end up feeling guilty as soon as you hit a day where you simply can't make it to the gym," says Professor Selig.

✓ THE NEW I'm going to buy a 10-pass package to see if I actually like the gym "This is more realistic, as it's setting a goal and taking action with small, achievable steps, while removing some of the pressure, too," says Professor Selig.

X THE OLD I'm going to be a size 8/10/12 for my wedding/reunion/birthday this year (even though the smallest I've ever been is a 14/16/18) "A resolution based on sizing can be difficult, simply because you don't control the fickle and unregulated sizing systems of the fashion world," says Dr Celi.

✓ THE NEW I'm going to fit into my favourite skirt/jeans/dress again "What's great about this resolution is that you know you used to feel wonderful in your favourite outfit, and that you once fitted into it. It's a realistic measure - and it makes you feel good," says Dr Celi.

X THE OLD I'm going to take up running and enter a half marathon "While the first part of this resolution is fantastic, completing a half marathon isn't always readily achievable for someone new to exercise," says Professor Selig. "Your resolution needs to challenge you, but it shouldn't overwhelm you."

✓ THE NEW I'm going to register for a 5km fun run "This is better because it's more achievable. You can start off with walking, then try jogging. Aim to complete a small fun run and feel the satisfaction of achieving that. Then, from there, gradually build up to completing longer runs," says Professor Selig. And one day, you *will* run that half marathon! ■