

Setting Realistic Resolutions for Success

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New Years is a time for setting goals and making resolutions, so I thought I'd talk about ways you can help increase the chances of success.

One common problem with New Years resolutions is the fact that people often set their initial goals and expectations too high and consequently end up breaking the resolution. This can lead to feelings of discouragement and disappointment in one's self, which in turn leads to failure to continue with the goal altogether.

When making a goal, you want to start out by setting the bar fairly low so accomplishing the task will be relatively easy. You can then add to the goal, setting the bar higher and higher as you go. Building upon goals through baby-steps helps make success more likely, which keeps your motivation level up and allows you to continue with your goal.

For example, if your resolution is to exercise, set a goal of exercising for at least 15 minutes once a week. Once you accomplish this, you will feel good about yourself and will likely be motivated to continue with your goal. You can gradually increase the goal by adding more time or days to your routine as you go.

Conversely, the person who sets the goal to exercise every day will likely be let down when this expectation isn't fulfilled due to life stressors and other obstacles that get in the way. The disappointment we feel and the negative self-talk we engage in following a setback often depletes our energy and enthusiasm, making it difficult to move forward with goals.

Set your goals and expectations low initially – It's easier to add to a goal after success than it is to have to re-define it due to failure. Make your goals very clear and measurable and ensure enough flexibility to account for times you just can't keep up with the goal. Cut yourself some slack and remember that mistakes and setbacks are inevitable, so don't beat yourself up over them. Instead, focus on praising yourself for the times you do accomplish the goal.

Finally, remember that our lives are constantly changing, so it makes sense that our goals will change, too. It is okay to redefine and reorganize your goals to fit with your current needs. Goals and resolutions are meant to better our lives, not create more stress, so make them realistic and ensure a greater chance of success.