

Tips for making better New Year's resolutions



Does it seem like you make the same New Year's resolutions each year? Here are a few tips to help you stick to your 2020 goals.

First think big; then think small. Don't be afraid to say that you want to lose 50 pounds, declutter your entire house, or compete in a marathon. Many people have accomplished such goals, and you can, too. But you have to start with baby steps. Break hard jobs down into smaller line items. Rid your house of junk food. Decide that today you will clean one closet.

Make resolutions that you think you can keep. If, for example, your aim is to exercise more frequently, schedule three or four days a week at the gym instead of seven. If you would like to eat healthier, try replacing dessert with something else you enjoy, like fruit or yogurt.

Change one behavior at a time. Unhealthy behaviors develop over of time. Replacing them with healthy ones also requires time. You may become overwhelmed if you try to make too many changes at once.

Don't beat yourself up. Minor setbacks are completely normal. Everyone has ups and downs; try to recover and get back on track.

Ask for support. This could mean anything from asking family members to help more at home so you can work out, to calling a smoking-cessation hotline to hiring a personal trainer. There's no need to go it alone if there are people who can contribute to your success.

Commit yourself. Make yourself accountable through a written or verbal promise to people you don't want to let down. Tell a few close friends or colleagues, or post your goals on social media and let others cheer you on.

Celebrate each small success. Don't wait until you've lost every last pound or finished that marathon to call yourself a winner. Health changes are incremental. Pause to acknowledge success every step of the way. Pat yourself on the back each time you pick up your socks from the floor or resist that cookie.

Learn from prior attempts. Every "failure" is actually a step toward your goal. Learning what doesn't work can teach you a new and different approach to try next time.

Sources: health.harvard.edu; apa.org.

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