



How to Avoid Another **FAILED RESOLUTION**

Your Guide to Making New Year's Goals That Stick





Think Back

Did you set any New Year's resolutions last year? If you did, did they stick? If not, you're in good company. In fact, it's almost a cliché to say the majority of New Year's resolutions don't pan out. As a rule, they practically seem destined to not work. But even if your track record for resolutions isn't perfect, it still can be worth your time to set a new one this coming January 1.

Why?

Because starting off the next twelve months with a zeroed-in focus sets a positive tone for the year and can help drive meaningful change in your life. This New Year, be the exception to the rule.

Make resolutions that actually work. We're about to show you how.



How This Guide Will Help You

When it comes to resolutions, we need to look at more than their face value. We need to roll up our sleeves, fix ourselves a nice cup of tea or coffee, and dig into things a little bit.

The goal of this guide is to help you do exactly that.

- + You're going to learn how to identify what a "good" goal is.
- + You'll be given tools and strategies to help you set good goals.
- + You'll be provided with ideas on how to make your goals successful and your results sustainable.

Lastly, you'll be asked to reflect on some ideas about the fine art of decision-making. These ideas will have the potential to impact your life far beyond the calendar.

So, go ahead: Cut through the noise of "New Year, New Me" and discover what can happen when you love yourself enough to set goals that matter.



Tough Love Time

Here's a radical idea: You are responsible for your successes and "failures." You are responsible for the things you have or don't have in your life: the state of your health, the quality of your relationships, the depth of your financial wealth, the strength of your self-love, and the outcome of your goals. Total. Ownership.

This idea may seem a bit extreme (and even a bit uncomfortable), but let's just entertain the possibility that ***assuming total ownership of your life may be the best thing you can do for yourself.*** Who else knows you better, after all? Who else can truly understand your desires, feelings, thoughts, fears, and vulnerabilities? Who else can you control?

The willingness to look at yourself in the mirror and say, "I, and only I, am responsible for the experience and content of my life," is scary—but essential—if you want to get the most out of your precious time here on Earth.

On a less macro level, this ownership is also essential to achieving your goals and maintaining the outcomes you want.

But here's the thing about New Year's resolutions, or any goal for that matter: **There's more to it than "will power."**



The Two-Way Street of Goal Setting

Here's our argument: Maybe New Year's resolutions get a bad rap. Maybe they aren't inherently doomed to fail. Maybe it's not our will power that's flawed, but the goals themselves.

After all, you can have all the desire and determination in the world. You may even already buy into the concept of total ownership (kudos, if you do), and approach your life according to these ideals.

But if your goal doesn't actually matter to you, then any measure of "success" you have with it will feel superficial or fleeting at best, and frustrating or non-existent at worst.

To put it another way: If you're failing at resolutions and struggling with goals, then yes—you need to take an honest look at yourself to determine how your actions (or inactions) are contributing to your results. But you also need to take an honest look at your goals.



What Does a “Good” Resolution Look Like?

Not all goals were created equal. To make sure you’re busting your butt toward something that will work, it’s wise to make sure your goal has certain qualities.

The following four points tend to be true for goals that are genuine, meaningful, and smart (we’ll leave the clichéd acronyms out of this):



1.

The goal is in line with your highest values.

Your values are super, super important, and nobody has the same exact ones as you.

Values shape your day-to-day decisions as well as your overall path in life. They're "ideals" like independence, freedom, loyalty, honesty, family, health, and hard work, and—perhaps most importantly—they show up in your life as things, activities, and experiences, such as reading, travel, clothing, money, etc.

To help you understand what your values are, ask investigative questions, like:

- + What makes me the happiest, most fulfilled, and most proud?
- + What do I love to talk about, read about, write about, and think about?
- + What do I spend my money, time, and energy on?
- + How do I fill my space?

Answering these questions honestly will help you identify what your values truly are at the moment (not what you wish them to be nor think they should be). And this matters.



WHY?

Because if your goals aren't in line with your values, you're going to be fighting against yourself every step of the way.

IN OTHER WORDS:

Don't set a goal to travel if you don't care about traveling. Don't set a goal to take an art class if you're not interested in art.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with doing something you've never done before and venturing out of your comfort zone. There's value in trying something new simply for its own sake. But if your goal asks this of you, be sure to have some conscious intention about it. As in: you may not have a high value on dancing, but you're willing to sign up for a hip-hop class because you know doing so will be a good lesson in confidence, facing your fears, and not taking yourself too seriously.

What all this requires of you is a whole lot of self-permission to be who you are. Not easy, but worth it.



2.

The goal is “chunk-downable.”

How does one eat an elephant? One bite at a time. A good goal can be easily and logically broken down into small and manageable steps.

3.

The goal is sharable.

Good goals are simple enough, clear enough, and realistic enough to share with other people.

Indeed, telling your friends and family what you're working toward can be beneficial, since in-the-know loved ones can help leverage your personal accountability (plus, it's fun to celebrate successes with others).

On the other hand, there's a lot of power in privacy, so it's okay if you choose to keep some goals to yourself. In these cases, it's enough simply to tell your trusted loved ones you're working on something important, and their support is dear to you. If you don't even feel like doing that, just make sure you can describe your goals to yourself in a clear and concise way.



4.

The goal makes you stretch.

There are two ways to lose someone's interest:

BE BORING OR BE CONFUSING.

Good goals keep you interested, engaged, and inspired because they are challenging enough to intimidate you a little, but not so challenging that they paralyze you with fear, self-doubt, and disillusionment.

They are tough, but feasible.

Lastly, good goals change in you in some way. If they don't have this potential, you might be engaging in a somewhat delusional dance with fantasy or status quo.

So, be willing to get a little uncomfortable. That's usually where growth happens.



7 Questions to Help You Create Genuinely Meaningful Goals

By now, you've got the bones of what a good goal is. Now, it's time to start developing the muscle, so to speak.

Grab some paper and a pen, get into a room with a door, and close the door.

The challenge is to give yourself thirty to sixty quiet minutes to reflect honestly and deeply on the following questions. Doing so will help you articulate, edit, and finalize your list of goals, so you can be more confident they're a best fit for you.



1.

Why does this goal matter to me?

THE TRUTH OFTEN FALLS OUT WHEN YOU PUT THINGS BLUNTLY. Sometimes, stepping back and asking a simple, straightforward question can help you get some perspective on an issue. That's what this question is designed to do.

2.

Does this goal excite me?

WHILE CHALLENGING, GOOD GOALS ARE ALSO FUN AND EMPOWERING – that's what makes them so rewarding. Both the outcome and the process of getting there can be things to look forward to.

You'd be wise not to use excitement or fun as your only parameters for whether your goal is effective, though. We can imagine, for instance, the decided lack of pleasure and excitement felt by a person who is in the process of quitting smoking.

But if you visualize yourself as having already achieved your goal, and that image excites and moves you, then yes—you might be onto something.



3.

When I talk or think about this goal, am I using the words “want to” and “love to” or “have to” and “ought to”?

Words like “ought to,” “have to,” and “should” are red flags. They’re a sign you may only be doing something because you feel obligated to, based on some sort of external pressure or ideal (like the expectations, demands, or wishes of your community, society, or family).

Likewise, if you frequently say, “I’ll try,” or, “Maybe I will,” in regard to your goal, this often means you’re not fully invested or committed—at least not yet. In general, people don’t “try” to do things they deeply care about: one way or another, they just do them.

A man in a blue tank top is performing a push-up on a black mat in a gym setting. The background shows a brick wall and some gym equipment.

4.

What other things in my life would become easier or irrelevant, or what problems would be solved, if I achieved this goal?

GOOD GOALS HELP YOU MANY TIMES OVER AND IN MULTIPLE AREAS OF YOUR LIFE.

Aim to design your resolutions in such a way that you can clearly link them to other benefits within your career, finances, relationships, mental health, and physical health.

Not sure how achieving your goal (let's say it's fat loss) will help you in areas such as your finances or your relationship with your children?

CONSIDER THIS: Losing excess body fat reduces your risk of obesity-related illnesses and associated healthcare costs, saving you money in the long term. Plus, maintaining an ideal body weight sets a positive example for your children and affords you more energy to play and engage with them.

TAKE YOUR TIME. THINK. GET CREATIVE. It's entirely possible to find twenty, fifty, or some hundred-plus benefits from even the simplest or most specific resolution.

A woman with curly hair, seen from behind, looking out over a cityscape. She is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and has a white bag slung over her shoulder. The background is a blurred cityscape under a clear sky.

5.

What activities (and associated values) am I willing to change or give up in order to achieve my goal?

VALUES CAN AND DO CHANGE, AND IT IS POSSIBLE TO CHANGE THEM IN ORDER TO HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS. This might be necessary in some cases, especially if the goal you've set aims to address an unhealthy life habit, such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, poor eating habits, or chronic "busy-ness."

Let's say you value leisure and luxury. You love watching television, going out to dinner, eating dessert, and drinking wine. While there's nothing inherently "wrong" about these activities (which you'll note reflect your values of leisure, luxury, and comfort), you may decide they're holding you back from the overall well-being you truly want for yourself and believe you deserve.

So, identify the things you may need to give up or replace for you to achieve a given goal.

THEN ASK YOURSELF: Am I willing to do that?

If you are, great. That could be a sign that you're headed into a huge shift in your life.



6.

If I had one month to live, would I still want to work on this goal?

NOT TO BE MOROSE...BUT LET'S GET A LITTLE MOROSE.

We all have our time, and nobody knows when that time will be.

TO THAT POINT: Do more of what's important to you, and do less of what isn't.

The best goals are the ones that give us a sense of satisfaction, empowerment, and fulfillment even in their developing, unfinished state. Time spent working on these goals is never time wasted, because we are employing self-love, expanding our minds, and bettering ourselves in the process.

Sure, the end can justify the means. But the means can justify the means, too.

How will I know when I've achieved this goal?

Good goals have a clear end-point. There is some measure or criterion you can use to know unequivocally when you've accomplished your goal.

The resolution "have a better relationship with my mother" is commendable, but if it isn't unpacked any further, how will you ever know if you've succeeded?

Here's how the same goal may look when written in a clearer way, with parameters that feel appropriate to you:

- + "I consistently have dinner with mom once a month by July 1."
- + "I routinely go for an hour-long walk with my mom once a week by March 31."
- + "I attend a family counseling session with my mom by January 31."

LISTEN: You're the architect of your own life, which means you have to decide on the metrics you'll use to build yourself a better one.

So, remember, when it comes to your New Year's resolutions, be as specific and detailed as possible, especially when describing your desired outcome. Nebulous objectives tend to yield lackluster results.



Hacking Your Resolutions: Tips on Sticking to Your Goals

By this point, and thanks to some introspective and self-reflective questions, you now have the bones and the meat of your New Year's resolutions. You're clearer about what they look like and clearer about why they matter to you. Taking the time to complete those two steps is insurance in itself to your goals working better this time around.

But if you really want to hedge your bets, consider the following tips, all of which are intended to help you achieve and maintain your success:



Write down your goals in positive, present tense, "I" statements.

"I lose 25 pounds of fat or more by June 30, 2018."
"I consistently meditate for 10 minutes a day, 7 days a week, by February 1, 2018." "I grow my cash emergency fund to the equivalent of three months' expenses or more by December 31, 2018."

Read your goals on a regular basis.

Revisiting your resolutions—and getting them out of your head and into the physical realm—solidifies them in your mind and makes them more "real." Try re-writing your resolutions every morning, posting them around the house on sticky notes, or even storing them in a note file on your phone.

Work on at least one aspect of your goal, no matter how small, every day.

If daily isn't appropriate, then figure out whichever frequency is—and commit to it.



Level up.

If you achieve your resolution more quickly than expected, consider updating it instead of just crossing a line through it and doing a little happy dance (but see the next point about happy dances). This prevents you from falling into a complacency trap and lets you use the momentum of your win to launch you into your next goal.

Celebrate your victories!

Setting meaningful goals is good for your soul, and when you accomplish one you care about, allow yourself to be pumped! Let your friends know, post something on social media, or give yourself a self-nurturing gift such as a massage or a weekend away. Just be sure to avoid gifts that conflict with the intent of your goal, or anything with a tendency to promote spiraling consumption (of food, money, external validation, etc.). Your accomplishment in itself is a reward, of course, and many times a quiet moment with yourself in the mirror is enough. "You did it. I knew you could. I believe in you."



A Final Word

“Personal development” is a complicated term. On the one hand, it’s an honorable and plucky act of self-love to treat yourself more compassionately and start making choices to help you be the “best” version of yourself. On the other hand (and this is a big hand): You are enough, exactly as you are right now. Resolution or no resolution.

So, as you approach this New Year—or whenever you next decide to set a goal—come with the belief that you are setting a resolution not because you dislike yourself now, but because you love yourself always. Be willing to make tough choices because you care about yourself, not because you deserve punishment.

Be willing to put yourself first, because it’s good for all of us when you do.

Be willing to fail, because it’s human.

Be willing to keep going, because you can.



With just a nudge (and a little bit of effort), you can have the life you want – happy, healthy, active, energetic, and connected.

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

The Whole Life Challenge is a 6-week health and wellness game that focuses on The 7 Daily Habits.

THE 7 DAILY HABITS

Throughout the Challenge, you'll practice the habits every day – Nutrition, Exercise, Mobility, Sleep, Hydration, Well-Being, and Reflection – with the ultimate goal of incorporating them into your life. They'll work together to help you become happier and healthier.

WANT TO PLAY?

You can register to play the next Whole Life Challenge here: <https://www.wholelifechallenge.com/join-the-challenge/>