Attaining your New Year's resolutions

Lose weight, eat right, stop biting nails, quit smoking—the new year, for many people, means a new slew of positive changes. While embracing change and staying committed to your resolutions can be difficult, there are ways to succeed. The tips below can help strengthen your resolve to stay on track and turn over a new leaf once and for all.



Chose carefully. Make sure changes you resolve to make are ones you're prepared to stick out in good times and in bad.

Don't resolve your life away. Examine your lifestyle and choose one or two things that you'd really like to change or accomplish. Limiting resolutions will help keep your energy focused and positive.

Draw up an action plan. Many people blurt out resolutions without any idea about how they're going to actualize them. Lay out a list of specific changes to get you to your goal. If you've decided to drop some weight in the new year, for example, your action plan may include taking the stairs instead of the elevator, substituting fruit for your morning doughnut or switching from cream to milk in your coffee. Putting pen to paper reinforces your desire to change, pushes you to think deeply about it and can help make your resolution a reality.

Set smaller, obtainable goals. If the only exercise you've done in recent years is the walk from the TV to the fridge, don't vow to cross the finish line of a marathon by Valentine's Day. Be realistic and establish a series of mini-goals on route to your ultimate, big triumph.

Avoid telling naysayers at all costs. Negative friends and family—especially those with whom you shared the bad habit you're trying to break—may try to persuade you to fall off the resolution wagon. Changing your usual routine can help you stay away from these challenging situations. If you used to indulge in a coffee and smoke break with a colleague, steer clear of the coffee shop and go for a walk instead—at least until you're feeling less vulnerable.

Don't go it alone. Share your desire to change with someone you know will support you in your quest for self-improvement. Confiding in an encouraging friend or family member will help you stay on course. Whether you promise to get your finances in order or decide to eat healthier, getting advice and information from a professional can get your resolution off on the right foot.

A strong initial commitment to make a change, combined with the goal-setting suggestions outlined in this article, will set you well on your way to making—and keeping—your new year's resolutions. For added encouragement, be sure to keep track of your progress, and share your milestones with friends and family along the way.