

5 Tips for Finally Keeping That New Year's Resolution



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Keeping a New Year's Resolution is about as difficult as holding water in your hands. Slowly it all trickles through your fingers, until all that's left is a damp feeling reminding you that you failed to accomplish your goal. Whether your resolution was to finally shed that elusive 10 pounds, or to find a new job, you always start off with the best of intentions but it's not long before you've forgotten that bright feeling of optimism that you had during the countdown to midnight.

So, how can you make 2013 more successful in reaching those self-set goals?

Before I serve you up with some resolution setting tips, I should divulge that I have not been that great with my own New Year's aspirations in the past. I would often create goals that were so lengthy and involved that I could never seem to live up to them. 2012 has been the closest I've come to keeping my New Year's resolution because I followed some well-researched advice. So, in summary, if you follow these tips and find great success as a result, don't thank me. Thank Google.

1. Set a Resolution Based on Your Personal Values



Think alllllll the way back to New Year's Eve 2011. Where were you when you set your resolution? Quite possibly, you were with a group of friends or family, and someone asked you that traditional question, "What is YOUR New Year's resolution?"

It is pretty typical to not even think about setting a goal for the New Year until just hours before the ball drops. I know that I rarely take the time to carefully think through my personal goals in advance of a new year's party, and next thing I know I'm sipping champagne and trying to think of something that makes me sound self-reflective. In fact, I often spend such little time thinking about a resolution that one year I won Best New Year's Resolution at a bar because I blurted out that my goal was to "kill more zombies" (hey, "Left 4 Dead" was a very popular video game that year).

Groupthink can often lead you to setting strange goals that aren't really important to you. For example, if all of your friends are vowing to lose weight, or eat better, or go to the gym more, you may just stick with the trend and come up with a similar health oriented resolution... even if it isn't really that important to you personally. Take a little time this year to think about your resolution while you are alone and have a quiet moment to consider what really matters in your own life. You're a lot more likely to keep a resolution if it's

something of personal importance to you.

2. Set Goals that are Measurable

Your New Year's resolution may be something general, like "be more patient." Having a general goal is okay, but you need to set measurable steps to determine how you will actually reach that goal. For example, if you are trying to be more patient, create an actual objective, like "When I get upset, I will count to ten before responding." Doing a little research in advance isn't a bad idea either. If you are planning to eat better, find out some techniques to help you buy health conscious groceries, or invest in a healthy living cookbook.

3. Get a Little Help from a Friend



This tip is a good one, but you also have to be careful with it. For example, if you have a close friend who also wants to work out more, it may be beneficial to go together and get a gym membership. You may even choose to work out together on set days and encourage one another. However, as much as a friend can help a resolution, they can also damage it if they stop taking it seriously. In my past experience with workout buddies, they can either encourage you to get off the sofa and onto the treadmill, or they help you make excuses not to work out. If you're already feeling a bit lazy and your friend calls to cancel your workout session, it's all too easy for you to decide to just say "screw it."

With any successful resolution, it has to be about something you truly want for yourself, and so only you can hold yourself

to that standard. Of course, it certainly still helps to have someone who cares about you check in and see how you're progressing or give you encouragement from time to time.

4. Think About What You Usually Do Wrong... And Then Don't Do That

If every year you promise yourself you'll spend more time volunteering in the community, and yet you find you only did the same three events you always help with, maybe it's time to consider what you're doing wrong. Is it because you are afraid to branch out of your comfort zone? Or maybe you're not planning in advance and keep missing the sign up for opportunities. Whatever the reason, think carefully about what has kept you from your goals in the past, and then think about how you can refrain from those same behaviors. Make part of your resolution planning be preparing yourself to make changes to bad habits.

5. Set Out to Achieve, Not to Avoid

As you go around the room on New Year's Eve asking people what their resolution is, you hear a lot of things like "stop smoking" or "stop drinking coffee." These are pretty typical resolutions, and can be good ones for your health, but there is also a negative tone to the way they are phrased. Negative resolutions have been found to be less likely to be followed. If you want to stop smoking, set reasonable steps to arrive at that goal. As you pass each step, you will have a positive rush from accomplishing something important, which is likely to last you longer into the year than if you think of it as "depriving" yourself.

So, instead of thinking "I will stop drinking coffee!" think something like, "Each week I will drink one less coffee". You get the idea!