

Do's and Don'ts of New Year's Resolutions

By Tyler Bizarro

2017 could be described by many as a trying year, to say the least. And as the calendar year comes to an end, the opportunity is presented to us to reflect back on the highs and lows. Given these reflections, we are able to look forward to what we would like to accomplish in life and how we plan to get there. In other words, we are able to create "New Year's Resolutions" to spark positive lifestyle changes.

Now I know many of you are probably rolling your eyes, and trust me-I get it. How often does someone we know say they are going to lose weight, quit smoking, or start hitting the gym for their New Years resolution, and by February they are back doing the same thing they vowed to change?

Pretty often.

I'm not here to convince you that you should or shouldn't write a list of New Year's Resolutions. Ultimately I believe that there is much more anticipation for New Year's eve than there is actual importance of 2017 changing to 2018. January 1st is just another day. Rather, I believe that just as successful companies create and follow mission statements, people create and follow personal mission statements for daily guidance. New Year's resolutions are the same concept wrapped into a holiday. So if you are like me and scoff at cheesy traditions, you may find value in a more introspective approach to New Year's resolutions.

And so if you do choose to make some New Year's resolutions, or personal mission statements, here are some do's and don'ts.

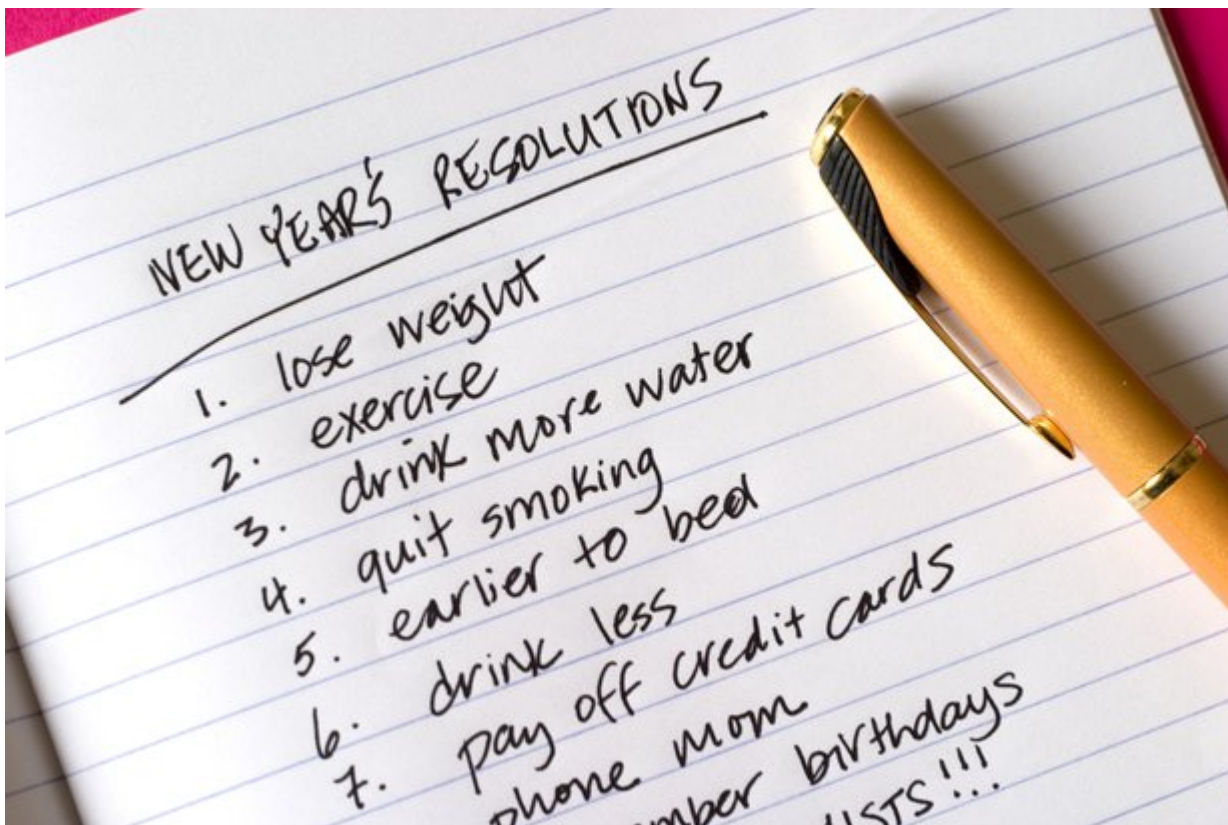
#1 (Do) WRITE IT DOWN

Arguably the most important piece to creating an effective New

Year's resolution is writing it down. Without this step, there is no tangible record of your mission; making it easier for you to forget about it down the road. The physical act of writing down thoughtful goals in your own voice is a tremendously beneficial exercise, so don't shortcut it with an iPhone. Getting your goals on paper is the key to holding yourself accountable for them, which we'll get to later.

#2 (Don't) MAKE IT PUBLIC

This is where much of the stigma towards New Year's resolutions comes from. Many people create resolutions as a means to signal virtues and share vague aspirations at parties and on twitter. They get a pat on the back and 3 weeks later they've forgotten about it entirely. Making your goals public adds a whole new layer of expectations and stress to your life. And for the average person, what is their to gain?



Validation when you tell friends your goals? Credibility because you can admit you need to change some aspect of your life? These are relatively pointless values to hold by themselves; like cheap highs. Instead, realize that you are

the only person who truly needs and wants to know what your resolutions are and your progress going forward. A grounded, selfless approach will allow you to consider what's more important to you going forward, and helps ensure you aren't letting others dictate your life choices. Family and close friends care about your quality of life and can be very helpful, but ultimately have their own set of problems to take care of as well. A more fruitful mindset would be to let people realize what changes you've made for themselves and continuing regardless of their judgments. The alternative is like being a dog whose all bark and no bite.

#3- (Do) READ IT WEEKLY

This is sort of an obvious piggyback off of #1. The point of writing is to have something to hold yourself accountable with; something to read. This is something I struggled with at first for several reasons. Writing getting destroyed or lost and procrastination being the main ones. But this process is important because without it we have no barometer for our daily actions. Without reading what we want we aren't constantly reminding ourselves of the bigger picture.

We wouldn't be able to know when to cross off goals and create new ones if we weren't subconsciously aware of our aspirations. And so to read our resolutions at least once a week would be a great way to positively reenforce the changes we want for ourselves. Especially if we read these resolutions when we feel like we are struggling to begin our work(bonus tip). Just reading what we want everyday could spark positive action.

#4- (Don't) OVERDO IT

Sometimes we put so much onto our plate that we set ourselves up for failure. When creating New Year's resolutions, it's important to keep the major lifestyle changes (going to a gym regularly, eating vegetarian) at a doable pace. 1 or 2. If you take on too many major tasks at once you're risking the quality and effectiveness of each activity, and your own well

being too. As time passes and you adapt to these changes, you'll be able to allocate your time to improve in other areas as well.

Timetables for New Year's resolutions are entirely subjective, so the more you dedicate your time and effort to your mission the more efficient you'll be. But if you take on too much, efficiency turns into procrastination which turns into giving up. So avoid putting too much onto your plate, and understand when to put more on it.

#5- (Do) BE SPECIFIC

Don't be vague. "I want to be rich" sucks. "I want to be healthy" sucks. "I want to get a new job" sucks. For resolutions to be long lasting changes and worth our time, they need to get to the core of a major issue or need in our lives; exploring why and how it affects us and what we are willing to do to make it a favorable situation. So yeah you want to be rich, but are you willing to grind 70hours+ a week, call dozens of strangers a day, and stress constantly for it?

And how much is 'rich'? If you want to get a good job with long term potential, you must have figured out what it is you would be willing to lose sleep for. You must detail what line of work you're interested in, existing employers, how you plan to contact people, how to package and sell your skills. Your resolutions should include the full scope of why, how, and by when you'll be resolving your problems given possible roadblocks. If your resolutions are not detailed than your road-map will lead you nowhere.

#6- (Don't) BE IMPATIENT

The cliché part of my brain wants to say Rome wasn't built in a day. The most impactful changes you'll make could ultimately be lifelong. And so it is important to keep setting realistic dates for specific goals (even if you have to postpone), while keeping lifestyle changes as timeless qualities to continually pursue. If you realize a month in that you can't bench press

as much as you'd hoped at the start, use it as motivation and an opportunity to learn why you came up short. And set another time to accomplish the goal given this insight. What's more important is that you're constantly working towards the goal.

The benchmark of meeting the goal is just a formality to adding additional goals, continuing the cycle of personal growth. So don't scrap your resolutions if you find that you aren't meeting some of the timeframes you had originally set. Be patient with it and readjust given the body of work you're putting together and self reflection. And most importantly, keep working towards resolving your problems. Its about the journey, not the destination.

Cliches are a cheesy tradition I usually scoff at. Should probably resolve using them so much.

Happy New Year!