

How to Keep your New Year's Health Resolutions

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According to a recent survey done on New Year's resolutions, 70% of respondents resolved to eat healthier or go on a diet, 65% made an intention to exercise and 54% set a specific goal to lose weight. How many do you think are successful? Although these are all worthy goals, unfortunately, about 80% of people's resolutions fail by the second week of February.

Follow these tips and knock those statistics out of the water!

1. Set reasonable goals

I was on social media the other day and I saw this comment: "I am going on a no-carb diet for the new year." I wrote back to them: "I assume you mean a no grain diet and that you are still eating fruits and vegetables." They quickly wrote back to me, "no, I am eating only meat, zero carbs". This is not only an unreasonable health goal, it is also dangerous. Eating nothing but meat is a huge drain on the kidneys and also means your body is missing many essential nutrients. Make sure your health goal is really one that is for the betterment of your health. If you are not sure, check in with a doctor or dietitian for guidance. Remember, you want to make health goals not "un-health" goals!

2. Prepare

One of the problems with New Year's resolutions is that they are most often made in the heat of the moment on the last night of the year, often while many of us are overindulging. When we wake up the next morning there is a flurry of activity trying to find diets and exercise plans online. To make a health goal without some planning makes it less likely that we will complete (or even begin) the goal. If you have a health goal you made in the New Year, make sure you spend some time, maybe on the weekend really planning your goal.

3. One thing at a time

I often hear (and have made this mistake myself) someone's overwhelming New Year's resolution. It goes something like: "I am going stop eating sugar, drinking coffee, eating gluten and I am going to start going to the gym every day. Too many changes at once is not only a lot for your body to handle it is also easy to start waning on one goal and then the next ones begin to tumble until you are back to where you started. Try choosing one or two resolutions at the most and focus on those. If you have already given up on your resolutions maybe you can start again and just chose one.

4. Renegotiate

Ok, so you realized pretty quickly that your goal was too over ambitious or was simply something you won't really do. This is the time to think about what will work for you and renegotiate your goal. There is no shame in renegotiating, it actually makes it more likely that you will accomplish the goal. If your resolution was to go to the gym every single day and you did this for 3 days and then gave up, maybe you renegotiate to going Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Whatever you think is truly possible is what you should renegotiate to.

5. Forgive yourself

It's bound to happen. You have given up some food or have made an exercise plan of some sort and one day you don't do it. You eat that sugar or gluten or you don't make it to the gym. You can go down a path of guilt and depression or you can simply forgive yourself and start again. If you don't make it an issue, it will be easier to jump back on your resolution.

6. Begin again

In mindfulness training, whenever your mind wanders from focusing on your breath, you simply return back to your breath. No judgment, no guilt, with the only goal of returning to your breath. The same is true of your goals. If you get off track with your goal, simply return back to it. You may need to do this more than once, but as long as continue to return to the path, your goal will be yours!

7. Get support

Having a support system around your health goals is very beneficial especially with goals that you struggle with. For me, I generally eat well, but have a hard time being consistent with exercise. Finally, this year, I decided to get a trainer that I meet with 3 times per week and I ask friends to go hiking with me on the other days. This gives me an accountability that I have a hard time creating for myself. Because of these supports in my life I haven't missed a day of exercise yet! Who can you ask for support? Do you need someone like a trainer or a dietitian to help guide you along the way? Are there family members or friends that have similar goals as you and want to support you?

Whatever your health resolutions are for the year, I hope that you accomplish them and have a healthy, productive year!

