



Four Ways to Reach Your Health Goals in 2017

Bill Bradley, R.D.

Many of us resolve, year after year, to exercise more, eat better, and live simpler, less stressful lives. But if it were easy to achieve these goals, we probably wouldn't feel the need to set New Year's resolutions (or need to read this article). You CAN maintain desired changes in your lives. Here are some ways to increase your chances of following through and feeling marvelous in 2017:

Turn your goals into habits

Recently, I spoke to a highly successful friend of mine. I asked him how he was able to accomplish so much and he told me that he had stopped focusing on goals and instead created habits that would lead to the life he wanted.

Do you feel that you are controlled by "bad" habits? Most of our daily actions are habits and these habits can be changed. Being successful requires you, first, be aware of your habits. Take an honest look at them one at a time. What is really driving you to do what you do? When you identify these patterns, you can then create a plan for change. Charles Duhigg has done a tremendous amount of research on this topic. In his book, *The Power of Habit*, he breaks down what it takes to really change. [Here is a video that introduces the theory behind changing habits.](#)

Create a morning routine

I find that the most powerful time to take care of myself is in the morning. When I wake up, I spend a few minutes in grateful silence, do an exercise routine, and make a healthy breakfast and lunch for

the day. I have a completely different experience throughout the day when I follow this routine than if I had awakened, loaded myself with coffee and just headed to work. A good morning routine is simply a set of habits that keep you energized throughout the day and improves your overall health in the long term. Here are two popular habit apps that you can load onto your smart phone:

Android: [Loop-Habit Tracker](#)

Iphone: [Productive habits and daily goals tracker](#)

[And here is a website that highlights successful people's morning habits.](#)

Find foods that you love *and* are good for you

Contrary to popular belief, food that is healthy, anti-inflammatory, and packed with antioxidants is actually the food that is the most delicious. Gone are the days of eating rice cakes topped with cottage cheese in the name of weight loss and health. Study after study has shown that eating the high (healthy) fat, incredibly delicious diet of the Mediterranean will not only decrease the risk of many chronic diseases, but will also fill your belly with comfort and joy. I recommend trying some of the many foods of the Mediterranean as well as recipes from Asia (another very healthy area of the world). Find the foods you love and celebrate amazing food that is healthy for you. Here are some Mediterranean recipes I think you will enjoy:

[Shrimp with Feta and Tomatoes](#)

[Italian Baked Polenta with Vegetables](#)

[Pan-Fried Peppers with Feta and Olives](#)

[Egg Noodles with Walnuts and Basil](#)

Find motivated friends and support each other

I go hiking with a friend every Tuesday and Thursday. Each week, we check in with each other, talk about our goals, and hold each other accountable. We are exercising and supporting each other in other ways. Finding positive, motivated friends to help you with your health goals is incredibly helpful. Some groups of friends have weekly "healthy eating" get-togethers. Everyone brings a healthy dish and Tupperware containers. After a dinner is shared, everyone fills up their Tupperware with food so they will have one or two more healthy meals during the week. There are a lot of different ways to support each other's health habits. The first step is talking with your friends to see who is interested. Getting support around your health is one of the most positive indicators of success. Here is an article on [goal buddies and how to find a good one.](#)

Changing your habits, creating a morning routine, trying new foods and getting support from friends are all ways to help you have a wonderful 2017- full of energy and accomplishment. Let me know how you do, or share your past success! You can reach me at bbradley@mma.org.

Enjoy!

