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Foreword

Year after year, people make ambitious New Year's resolutions that are almost invariably broken. The biggest reason most resolutions are broken, usually before February begins, is that they are too strict or extreme to be effective for the individual who set them. Aiming for a goal set too high is likely to result in failure. There are several simple ways to make resolutions that can be kept, and then keep them.

Resolution Retention Strategies

How to set realistic new years resolutions and keep them!

Chapter 1:

Reasonable Resolutions Are Easier

Synopsis

Too frequently the trend in our society is for individuals to be detached from one another. Automobiles have taken us off the streets, where we used to greet each other and stop to chit chat. Cubicles have removed a bit of the humanity in working, as have factories and even computers to some extent. Television has planted us firmly in our living rooms, instead of out with other people. Even movie theaters, where many people get together, cut us off from true conversation because we're staring at a big screen. You could also add to the list cell phones and social networks. It takes away from face o face conversation.

Reasonable Resolutions

Around the holidays and especially during New Year's, everybody announces a resolution that he or she plans on keeping. Only, a couple individuals actually do. We have all had our own encounters with some far-reaching, unrealistic goals: lose twenty pounds in six weeks, pay back all our credit card debt by the spring, never eat chocolate again...you name it.

This time around, try setting goals that are realistic and reasonable. Check into some resolution ideas that are simple to both manage and keep. Come year's end, not only will you've achieved a goal or two, you will not find yourself where you started last year—at square one!

Set goals that are reasonable and they'll be easier to keep. For instance, are you washing clothes? Brushing your teeth? Doing the dishes? Use cold water instead. It is one of the easiest and most efficient household changes you are able to incorporate toward your resolution. It takes a lot of energy to heat water. Cutting back on the amount used means big savings, not only on your energy bills, but also in carbon dioxide emissions. You'll be saving your wallet and the planet.

Instead of making a laundry list of promises to yourself, try picking just a few. If your resolution is to boost your health, try starting a single new healthy habit. Focus on it and practice it until it becomes a regular habit. For example, tell yourself that you'll drink 5-8 glasses of water a day, climb 50 stairs, and eat at least three servings of fruits and vegetables. This way, you will be able to channel your efforts into a single task, and will not get overwhelmed in the process.

Dedicate at least one night a month to spoil yourself. We all can use a good treat every at times. Treating yourself to something you enjoy is both fulfilling and relaxing. Give yourself a home facial, paint your fingernails and toenails, and take a long bath with bubbles and relaxing music, whatever you like. Just make certain to set aside time to do the things that relax you the most. You will feel recharged and rejuvenated in doing so!

Also, we can all afford to spend more time with loved ones. Make it a priority to set aside certain times throughout the week for friends and loved ones. Set up a night during the week to play board games with your kids.

Organize social activities with your friends that all parties enjoy: going out to eat, cooking a meal together, watching a movie, or jogging. Making the commitment to dedicate time to family shows your appreciation for them.

Remember, when setting resolutions, the goal should be to try to make them measurable, achievable, and realistic. So go ahead, set, plan, act, and stick to it this year. You can do it!

Chapter 2:

Setting Goals for Your News Year's Resolutions

Synopsis

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Setting Goals

The top New Year's resolutions are often tied to acquiring healthier habits and do not change much from year to year. Yet most individuals desert their resolve within weeks although they really would like to improve.

When it comes to New Year's resolutions, the inherent problem lies within the name. A resolution means to resolve to do something. It is a promise to yourself. Unfortunately, it does not include any plans or goals to make the change happen. To accomplish success pick out a set of goals and make plans to reach those goals.

Before stating the goal, write the desired result then consider what steps could help attain it. Work out if money, supplies, or tools are necessary. Have in mind what particular action can be taken to accomplish the resolution.

Think about how much time can be scheduled each day or every week towards working at the goal and what would be sensible to complete in those time slots. Every item necessary can be part of the greater goal, with a plan to save or obtain it. When making the list, choose a couple of activities or needs and state those as the actual goals.

Establish ways to make working at the goal simple. If it's to improve wellness, then establish an exercise area and mark time for it on a calendar. If it is to eat better, write a shopping list and stock up on the foods that are necessary, plus pull out healthy recipes and put them in a convenient location. Keep supplies or tools that are necessary together and accessible.

To keep on target plan ways to get and stay motivated. For physical activity, find a partner or plan a reward (like seeing a movie) for each

week goals are met. Create and print a chart or check list to track progress. The chart helps build in accountability. Write or print out motivational mottos. These can be Scriptures, wise sayings, encouraging words, or cheers. Post them.

Ask someone to be an encourager. Pass on the goal and ask the person email notes of encouragement. This makes it more social and provides outside motivation. You can list and post benefits of the goal. This keeps a person focused on the results and reasons to pursue the goal.

After a few weeks it's wise to evaluate the progress. Decide if the goals should be changed with higher or lower standards to fit real life. Mark the calendar ahead for a set day of every month to review the progress. This can keep a person motivated or even help someone restart if the goal has been abandoned for a few weeks.

Dream big, but break the dream into achievable goals and take it one step at a time. Commit to following the goal and plans laid out, or redo them into something more attainable.

Chapter 3:

Tips for Helping You Stick to Your Resolution

Synopsis

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15 Different Tips

Statistics show that only about 15% of New Years goals are maintained. It is no wonder that the amount of resolutions made is dropping. A strategy that fails over four fifths of the time is broken. The question is how do you fix it?

Most resolutions come in the form of habit modifications. Quitting smoking, hitting the gym and staying organized are all based on routine habits. I have spent the last couple years changing habits. Training myself to become organized, exercise regularly, eat healthy, wake up early and work productively.

I believe that most New Year's Resolutions fail because folks approach them wrong. Rather than developing a strategy for modifying habits, most individuals try to rely on willpower. Although willpower and motivation can get you through the first week or two, it cannot last forever. There's no perfect formula, but after changing dozens of habits in myself over the last few years, I can offer a couple of suggestions:

1. Create a Trigger. A trigger is a particular ritual you perform whenever you get a special cue. This ritual centers you on performing your habit, instead of sliding into old vices. Snapping your fingers when you feel the enticement to smoke; leaping out of bed at the sound of your alarm or repeating, "do it now!" to yourself are all triggers designed to kick your habit off. Practice your trigger and it will become automatic, overriding your default behaviors.

2. Replace Lost Needs. Most habits fulfill a purpose of some kind, even if the side-effects are damaging. You might watch television to

relax, even if you have other things you would rather do. You might eat junk food to feel full, even if it isn't healthy. Consider what you're giving up in your habit change and make an effort to replace those lost needs.

3. Write It in Ink. A commitment inside your head is not a commitment at all. Keep a binder where you are able to store written commitments for habit changes. Not only will writing reinforce a promise to yourself, it will clarify your thinking as to what exactly you would like to change.

4. Commit for a Month. Stick to your change for at the very least thirty days. Less than this and you're likely to fall back into old habits. Three to four weeks is all it takes to shape a new habit.

5. Keep a Journal. Open a new word document and commit to writing a couple of sentences every day about your progress. I have found this method helpful in reminding me about my commitment and helping me center on the change I would like to make.

6. Increase Positive Feedback. If you reward your behavior it will increase. Punish a behavior and it will be reduced. This feedback mechanism is common to all animals with a nervous system from sea slugs to human beings. If your new habit makes you feel worse than the old habits, it can't last.

7. Strategic Enjoyment. One way to create more positive feedback is to structure your habit so it becomes more fun. Going to the gym isn't the only way to exercise if you hate it. Eating tofu isn't the only meal option for vegetarians. Look for ways you can make a new habit more enjoyable.

8. Think Years, Not Months. A diet that consists of grapefruit and water isn't going to provide nutritional needs to last your whole life. Work on creating changes to your diet, work, exercise or routines that can be sustained for years. Crash diets and 18-hour workdays will eventually break.

9. If You Slip Up, Start Over. I consider a habit change complete when I can go thirty consecutive days. If you slip up and break your habit on the 3rd, 15th, or 27th day, start over. This keeps you from cheating on days with the excuse that you will resume the day afterwards.

10. Behavior First, Results Later. Don't let watching the scale or your bank account discourage you when trying to change a habit. The correct change in behavior has to come before any results start to appear. Focusing too much on losing weight, working less or being rich and throw off your attempts to form good habits.

11. One Habit at a Time. Don't tackle several changes at once. Successfully conditioning one habit change is more useful than giving up on a half dozen changes after a month.

12. Learn From Mistakes. This one is pretty obvious, but it's surprising how many people when they fail to make a change, go back to using the exact same strategy. Figure out why you failed previously, and don't be too quick to blame willpower.

13. Consistency Counts. A habit that is performed the same way, at the same time and under the same conditions every day for a month will be reinforced far more strongly than one that changes throughout

the week. Be consistent and you can spend less time reinforcing a habit.

14. Create a Habits List. When I started changing habits I created a list of all the changes I would like to make. Each month I'd pick one change and focus on it until I could cross it off the list. This method can focus your enthusiasm so you don't take

15. Get help -> It's been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that social support is the single biggest predictor of success in making ANY change. Surrounding yourself with like-minded people, positive role models and supportive friends and family will practically ensure your success. Don't just count on yourself, recruit an entire team towards the completion of your goal.

Chapter 4:

Keeping Your Resolution

Synopsis

Many individuals make resolutions for the New Year. It is all about change and improvement and it can be a great adventure, but keeping the resolutions is a whole different story.

Keeping Your Goals

Many individuals make resolutions for the New Year. It is all about change and improvement and it can be a great adventure, but keeping the resolutions is a whole different story.

The attempt to keep a New Year's resolution is fresh at the beginning of the year, but that effort fades, often just a couple of days into the month of January. With work, school, family and friends, it can be difficult to maintain focus on resolutions. There are ways to make sure you remain on track when working towards goals.

Constant reminding is the key to keeping yourself on target. You set the goal, so it would be unfair to let the year glide by with the excuse that you merely forgot. Get a calendar and a sharpie pen. Write down something that will remind you of your resolution in bold letters at the start of each week.

Find something that you look at each day, like the mirror or your cellular phone. Put a post-it note on the mirror and set you cell phones alarm for a certain part of the day when you need to remember. All of this can be simply cast to the side once you begin to annoy yourself, so recruit a couple of friends who would be willing to bother you further. You have to stay focused, after all.

Nothing will set you up for disappointment more than setting unattainable resolutions. If your goal is to slim down over this year, have a sensible number in mind, rather than in the triple digits. You need a resolution that will be only slightly intimidating, but something you believe you are able to accomplish with a good deal of hard work.

You cannot jump up to the top of the stairs while you are at the bottom. You have to take it step by step. Set lower goals for yourself, perhaps throughout the week, that will help you keep track of your progress. Doing this takes the stress and burden off of yourself from trying to obtain the big goal by the end of the year. The lower, more personal goals will boost your confidence.

Accomplishing what you set out to do, even if it's something small, is cause for celebration. The whole point to setting resolutions is to make you a better person and to feel good. Your resolutions may be tough, but these little parties are lights at the end of the tunnel. Desperation can often sneak in as the stress of the year starts pressing all around you, so this will be a good way to blow off steam and invigorate yourself. Every step on your journey brings you closer to your resolution at the end of the year, so stay positive.

Regardless what your New Year's resolution is, the battle will be more mental than physical. Take time to prepare your mind. Have your friends ready to encourage you when you need it. Be open with your concerns and your feelings, keeping them inside will only create unneeded hurdles for yourself. Along with your New Year's resolutions, resolve not to be beaten by any kind of negativity. Push through it, and you will be stronger on the other side, and your goal will be that much more gratifying to achieve.

You have your goals, so all that's left is to keep them. Apply what you learn to your journey and you may find that your goals evolve. They may change into something that you never put much thought into at first, but will change your life by the time you reach the end of the year. A lot can happen in a year.

Wrapping Up

Basically, keeping your New Year's resolution can be a great thing. Often resolutions revolve around changing your bad habits you've been living with most of your life. So, making a resolution, setting goals, and keeping it you'll find that this can really be a life changer. All you need is a few smaller goals, encouragement from others, and discipline, and you most definitely be able to do it! So why not get started writing your goals down now?