

Setting Resolutions That Stick

5 Tips on How to Set Goals & Hold Yourself Accountable All Year Long

As we begin a new year, it's customary for many of us to set personal goals for ourselves to accomplish over the course of the year. But how many of us set ambitious goals for ourselves, only to fall short or give up – and sometimes very early on in the process? If you fall into this category, rest assured you are not alone! Hence the joke, "My New Year's resolution this year is to keep my New Year's resolutions!" But why do so many of us fall short of our expectations for ourselves? We believe there are a couple of reasons why this happens:

- **The goal we set for ourselves is not something we truly wish to accomplish.** This one might seem obvious, but as human beings we are good at deceiving ourselves. Accurate self-appraisal does not always come so easily, and we find that often individuals make resolutions that seem desirable to them, only for that not to be the case in their heart of hearts.
- **The goal we set for ourselves is not something we could realistically accomplish in a year (or longer).** If your goal is to retire before the end of the year, and you do not have the means to support yourself over the course of the remainder of your life, short of an unlikely windfall such as winning the lottery, it is not very likely that you will accomplish this goal. A more attainable goal for the year might be to put yourself in a better position so that you can retire someday in the future – consider starting a retirement fund or adding to your 401(K) contributions, create a "nest egg" for yourself through savings, and develop and follow an annual budget that will allow you to spend less throughout the year.



However, perhaps the most common deterrent to accomplishing our annual resolutions is **that we do not go about the planning process in the best way**. It's easy to come up with a list of things we'd like to accomplish, but more difficult to break that down into manageable, attainable steps. Follow these 5 tips for making resolutions that stick!

1. **Dream BIG ... but plan small.** It's great to have a "big picture" goal in mind. As we move into the new year, it's a time when many of us set personal wellness goals for ourselves. Let's say you would like to lose 30 pounds - that's fantastic! But to accomplish your big picture goal, you need to plan small - that is, create a series of smaller, measurable goals for yourself that will eventually lead you to the big picture goal.

- a. Maybe you start with being more mindful of what you eat and incorporate daily exercise into your routine and set a goal of losing 1 to 1.5 pounds a week. Maybe you don't focus on the scale at all, but rather look at positive, healthy changes you can make in your day to day routine. The point is to focus on what you can do in one day or one week, rather than solely fixating on the big picture goal which could take months or longer to ultimately achieve - but you will get there!
2. **Measure your progress & make it visual.** Ever thought about writing your own book? Perhaps a memoir, or a book about something you love, or even a novel - potentially the next best-seller! Did you know that every November aspiring writers from across the globe participate in National Novel Writing Month, aka NaNoWriMo? The goal for each participant is to write a 50,000-word novel in 30 days. Sound daunting? It is - but how does writing 1,700 words a day sound to you? For context, the newsletter you are reading right now is approximately 1,100 words in length – only 600 words less than the daily word count goal for NaNoWriMo. If you think of the daily amount required rather than the grand total for the month, it's not so intimidating, right?
 - a. Create and chart your smaller daily or weekly goals. Put something on paper or create a spreadsheet or a running list on your computer, tablet, or phone. Check off goals or milestones as you complete them. Charting and seeing your progress will help you maintain momentum. Making it visual makes it more tangible and makes the big picture goal feel more attainable.
3. **Hold yourself accountable.** Don't go it alone! If you have a friend or family member who has a similar goal or resolution for themselves, consider teaming up, sharing tips for success, and offering support along the way. Look into online communities through social media. Put yourself out there and be open to new experiences and new approaches.
 - a. Another way to stay accountable is through incentives or small treats for yourself along the way towards your big picture goal. But be careful and make sure the incentive isn't something that might throw you off track. For example, if you're trying to live a healthier lifestyle and making changes to your daily diet and routine, promising yourself a "cheat day" every so often could run counter to your ultimate goal. At the same time, it's good to be flexible, because remember...



4. **Priorities can change; goals can shift.** So be flexible. To return to our earlier example of writing a book in 30 days: if you write in the evenings, but suddenly there is a temporary change to your work schedule or personal responsibilities dictate that you will have to temporarily sacrifice your writing time, don't beat yourself up! Life happens. Priorities change, but you can shift your goals accordingly. Maybe instead of trying to write so many words a day, aspiring authors should strive to write at least something every day - even if it's just a paragraph. The same logic applies to other types of goals as well.
5. **Learn to love the journey.** In the grand scheme of things, it's about the process, not the outcome. If your big picture goal is to lose 30 pounds, and you only lose 15 or 10 or less, remember that the key to sustained weight loss and long-term well-being is a healthy lifestyle. If you didn't meet your goal but you have established a better, balanced, and more wellness-oriented routine, that's a win. Forget the scale and focus on the positive changes you have made.

If you would like support in accomplishing the goals you have set for yourself in 2021, consider reaching out to your Ulliance Life Advisor EAP. Our Life Enhancement Coaching services can provide you that ongoing motivation and support that you need in order to accomplish your goals!



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