

**New year's resolutions —  
are they really such a good idea?**

Do you make New Year's resolutions only to abandon them in a week or two? You are not alone; Forbes magazine tells us that, while 45 % of Americans make New Year's resolutions, only about 8% of them are successful. Even worse, 25 % don't make it past the first week. Apparently we set our goals too high, become overwhelmed with competing priorities, and get frustrated. Another problem: non-specific resolutions without a way to measure success. Instead, use this simple, straightforward approach: Accept that lifestyle change is necessary and make changes one step at a time. Set up small, attainable goals throughout the year, instead of one large goal. Make your goal measurable and specific. For

example, instead of “eat healthy”, choose “Eat three servings of vegetables every day for six weeks”. Instead of “exercise”, try “walk briskly for ten minutes three days for the next four weeks.”

Focus on behavior change.

Determine clear steps to achieve your goal, such as joining a tobacco cessation class or reducing portions to help you lose weight.

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Make yourself accountable. Share your resolution with supportive friends/family. Track your progress in a journal or social media.

Keep an eye on the prize. Set up a small reward system as you achieve your goal. Don’t forget to set new, achievable goals too!

Nothing breeds success more than success itself.

Have your New Year's resolutions to maintain a healthy weight started out strong? Only to fizzle about now?

Get back on track with these points from the University of Houston Texas Obesity Research Center:

- **Document the evidence.** Write down what and how much you eat of everything. Writing things down helps you to stay in control and remember what you are eating and doing every day.
- **Keep on moving.** Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day. Daily physical activity significantly improves your body functioning, on a cellular level, and your body is better able to lose and avoid gaining weight.
- **Preempt the tempt.** Avoid situations where you are going to be hungry and at risk for making high-calorie choices. Eat a small snack every 3 hours. The snack should include some protein such as a small piece of reduced calorie cheese or a small handful of nuts.
- **Tell a friend.** Enlist the help and support of your friends and family. They may serve as a kind ear when you need to vent, or may have similar physical activity and eating goals as you.
- **Busy hands.** Keep your hands and mind busy. The key is to keep busy and not spend too much time thinking about eating. Try knitting, wood crafts or card games.
- **Plan ahead.** Anticipate and make a plan for what you will do in high-risk situations. Decide whether you are going to decline the chocolate pecan torte, have a bite or have a piece. If you decide to have a piece, plan in advance to eat a little less of something else.
- **Talk yourself into it.** You have talked yourself into plenty of things before, why should this be any different? Tell yourself you can do it. Every day, think to yourself, "I am doing great," "I can stick to my plan," "I am maintaining a healthy weight," and "I can stay on track."
- **Practice relaxing.** Stress is a prime cause of overeating. Prioritize time to reflect and relax every day.
- **Keep it real.** Don't expect dramatic weight loss immediately—not a realistic goal. Stay on track, keep focused and make small sustainable steps toward your goal.
- **Don't despair.** If you have fallen off the wagon, forgive yourself. And get back on