

From Wishes to Reality: How to make and keep your New Year's resolutions

The New Year's holiday certainly calls for celebration. It's a time filled with happiness and hope, as we anticipate a new beginning. It's also a time for planning and prioritizing our personal and professional aspirations.

This week, many of us will make lists and set goals to better ourselves and the lives of our families. But let's face it, there's a big difference between wishes and reality. Here are five questions to ask yourself when making your resolutions and help you achieve your objectives in 2010.

Is my goal a "should do," a "want to do," or "will do" resolution?

Most of us *should* eat less and exercise more, but wishing, hoping and dreaming won't help us shed a few pounds. "Should do" resolutions rarely inspire us, but instead cause anxiety and dread. "Should do" resolutions are usually less likely to become a reality.

Like a "should do" resolution, a "want to" resolution will not be met, unless we are willing to take action to make it happen. For example, I *want* to be fluent in Spanish. But am I willing to do the work hard to achieve that goal? Without the time and resources, I may not be able to achieve that "want to" resolution right now.

A "will do" resolution, however, is something we believe is possible. If I have time, resources and drive to take foreign language courses this year, I could learn to speak Spanish by 2011. Believing that you *will* achieve your goal is the first step to a successful resolution.

Does my resolution reflect current priorities?

Have you ever made a New Year's resolution because it sounds good, or because it's popular? Creating a successful goal means aligning that goal with your current priorities. Your dreams today may be very different than they were a year ago. This year, redefine your resolutions to reflect the circumstances of the present. The process will be exciting and energizing, inspiring you to achieve your goals.

What are my resources to accomplish this resolution?

Often, resolutions fail simply because we don't have the best information about how to pursue a goal. So we become frustrated and quit. As the new year begins, give yourself time to research your best options for achieving your goals. Researching a topic online or talking with a local expert will help you create an action plan, rather than just jumping right in and "winging it."

Remember to surround yourself with supportive people. Friends and family members are great resources for helping you achieve goals because they care about you and your success. You may even seek out a group in your community with similar goals.

What stopped me before?

Were you able to meet your goals in 2009? If not, now is the time to assess last year's resolutions and determine what stopped you from succeeding. Did you have a plan to achieve last year's goals? Or, did you simply lose your drive to complete your mission?

Another roadblock to success is having an "all-or-nothing" mentality. Just because you ate too many slices of chess pie last weekend doesn't mean that your fitness goals aren't attainable. Embrace every day as a new opportunity to make positive decisions toward achieving your goals. Don't let unrealistic expectations pressure you into quitting!

Why am I choosing *this* resolution?

Why is your goal important to you? If you achieve your goal, how will your life be different? Make a list of the benefits you'll reap if you achieve your resolution. Focus on your motivations. Whether you aim to improve health, enhance relationships, help your children thrive or make more money this year, visualizing your wish as a reality will help you achieve your goals. And remember to ask yourself, "What choices can I make today to bring me one step closer to my dream?"

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