

Make It Your Best Year Ever: New Year's Resolutions

Janell Weeks, LPC

Every January 1 you vow, "I'm going to make this the best year ever." You make your resolutions: I'm going to quit smoking, drop 25 pounds, save more money, make more friends, get a new job, improve my marriage. This is the year you're finally going to change.

By the second week in January, you've given up on your budget, you're back to a pack-a-day, the holiday leftovers have been devoured, and your New Year's resolutions have long since been abandoned. How can you avoid this cycle? Here are some tips for practical planning for your New Year's resolutions:

- ÿ Make your goals specific, measurable, and realistic. Instead of "I'm going to quit smoking," say "I'm going to make an appointment with my physician for a physical and find out about ways to support my smoking cessation. I'm going to have my last cigarette on December 31st. Then I'm going to throw away the rest of the cigarettes I have on hand, and I'm not going to buy any more."
- ÿ Write your goals down, and put them up somewhere you will see them every day. Seeing your goals in writing makes them more concrete. Taping a copy on your bathroom mirror and carrying a copy around in your wallet or planner will remind you of your goals.
- ÿ Reward yourself for making progress towards your goal. If you've dropped five pounds, reward yourself with a low-fat treat. If you've made a new friend, take him or her to a movie.
- ÿ Don't punish yourself if you slip up. One of the biggest reasons why we have trouble keeping our resolutions is because we try to do too much, too fast. Remember: little changes add up, too.

These tips were provided by Janell Weeks, M.S.

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