

A NEW YEAR, A NEW YOU!

At a New Year's Day party a fellow asked a friend for a cigarette. Another friend overheard the request and said, "Joe I thought you resolved to quit smoking this year?" Joe answered "I did. I am in phase one of my plan to quit." His friend asked "What is phase one?" "I no longer buy cigarettes!"

An article I recently read identified the following as the most common resolutions American's make each year:

Lose weight

Get in shape

Stop smoking

Get a better job

Reduce stress

Indeed, the odds are great that at some time in your life you have made at least one of these New Year's resolution (and shortly thereafter broken it). This year make sure you keep your resolutions by utilizing these recommendations that I have personally seen validated by my patients over the last thirty two years:

1. **Make realistic resolutions.** Strive for goals that are attainable. Success engenders further success. For example, if weight loss is a goal set five pounds as your target. Once you achieve this set another five pounds as the next goal. Incremental changes such as these are realistic and each one accomplished increases the likelihood of ongoing success.
2. **Plan ahead.** Much as athletes create a "game plan," develop strategies to deal with the temptations that will present themselves which may cause you to skip your exercise or eat the chips that mysteriously appear-and just as quickly disappear prior to a healthy meal in your favorite Mexican restaurant.
3. **Tell others.** Announce your resolution to friends and family members who you trust and know will be supportive of you and the change you intend to make. The best case scenario is to have an ally who will join you in your quest but choose your partner wisely. Don't be like the young lady who told a friend that she would like her help with weight loss. She asked her friend if she could call her when she craved a double

cheeseburger, large order of fries and a milk shake. Her friend responded “Of course. I’ll even drive you!”

4. **Persevere.** Psychologists tell us that it takes at least 21 days for a new activity to become a habit and 6 months for it to become ingrained in our personality.
5. **Forgive yourself.** The occasional slip up will occur and obsessing over it accomplishes nothing except in creating a defeatist mind set which can lead to failure. Examine why it happened and develop a strategy to deal with it in the future. Remember, there ain’t been a horse who’s never been rode and there ain’t been a rider whose never been thrown!
6. **Reward yourself.** Achieving the little goals we discussed in #1 above is worthy of celebration. Give yourself a bit of a treat as you move forward. A movie, tickets to a sporting event, a new shirt or blouse can be very positive rewards and spur you on to even greater accomplishments!
7. **Make no more than three resolutions.** Too many resolutions may result in lack of focus and subsequent failure in each. Prioritize those things that you want to address and start with the most important such as health improvement items (e.g. quit smoking, weight loss, physical fitness). As the year progresses add new resolutions. New Year’s Resolutions are common but there is no law that states we can’t have Valentine’s Day Resolutions, Birthday Resolutions, 4th of July Resolutions, or Monday Resolutions!

Interestingly, research shows that 63% of people say they are keeping their resolutions at two months. This year become one of those who are still keeping their resolutions at one year!!!

Joy, Jennifer, Mandy and I wish each of you a Happy and Prosperous New Year!!

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