

5 Reasons Resolutions Fail and What You Should Do Instead

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Empowering People, Enhancing Lives

Research shows most of us can stick it out a few weeks, but fewer than half are still going after six months. Only 8 percent are ultimately successful. The truth is change is hard, ridiculously hard. Even after a heart attack, only 14 percent of patients make any lasting changes around exercise or eating. The average person makes the same New Year's resolution something like 10 separate times without success. In fact, many of us just stop making resolutions because we failed at them in the past.

The first reason your resolutions fail is that they're usually vague. People want to get in better health. They want to improve their marriage. They want to make more money this next year, but they're vague.

Lose weight. Eat healthier. Be a better person. Spend less. Save more. Spend more time with family and friends. Exercise more often. Learn something new.

The bottom line is that goals have to be specific and in your control. You really need specificity to make your goal actionable. You need to have something clear in mind so you're able to start putting together a plan of what your next steps are going to be. Otherwise, you just end up paralyzed.

One of the most important things is to **write down your goals**. Almost 100% of people think it's important to have goals that are written, yet when asked who has written goals for this year for personal and/or work, only 5-10% raise their hand. These written goals are the SMART or SMARTER goals, not just a to do list. Goals that are specific, meaningful, measurable, relevant, and time-bound.

Resolutions vs Goals

A resolution is all these attributes we're talking about. It's vague. A goal is a carefully crafted statement that gives you clarity about what it is you want in one of the domains of life. It could be your marriage, it could be your vocation or your business, it could be your health, but it's very specific, it's measurable

The second reason resolutions usually fail is that they're boring.

Goal vs. Task

Goals need to be intrinsically motivating - we need to want to do it. If it isn't, it is not a goal but a task to accomplish - two different things. "Cleaning the garage or my office" isn't fun or exciting, it is a task, not a goal.

People lose their way when they **lose their why**. They need intrinsic motivation vs. extrinsic. Compelling goals are compelling or exciting when they're one of these four characteristics:

- They're either spiritually meaningful,
- Intellectually stimulating,
- Emotionally energizing, or
- Physically challenging.

The third reason your resolutions fail is because they're too easy. The truth is that challenging goals improve performance. You get excited about something that's tough, and the research backs that up. Difficult goals are far more likely to generate sustained enthusiasm and higher levels of performance, while realistic goals are not going to get you fired up.

There are 3 zones of comfort on the goals you set –

- Comfort zone - too easy, incremental - it doesn't compel, excite, or motivate us.
- Discomfort zone - challenging - it stretches you - You should feel some fear, uncertainty and doubt or it isn't hard enough. These feelings are indicators you are outside of your comfort zone.
- Delusional zone - unobtainable - not realistic. We want to be in the middle of challenging in order to get the motivation enough to accomplish our goals

Archery- we need to aim above the bullseye due to the resistance of gravity in order to hit the target we set. Same in goals - we need to aim above our target in order to take into account the resistance we'll have when shooting for our goal/bullseye. Sandbagging with goals means we create a wall of protection, a way to keep ourselves from getting hurt or humiliated in the event that we don't accomplish the goal, but usually that humiliation is far less. If you're not failing enough, you're not trying enough hard things that really matter.

The fourth reason resolutions usually fail is that they're overwhelming. Maybe you set a goal to get healthy, and then you come up with all of these subgoals, like, "I'm going to lose weight. I'm going to drink more water. I'm going to get more sleep, work out four times a week, eat better, sit less, cut out fast food." That's a recipe for overwhelming.

Want fewer goals and more relevant goals. Too many goals is overwhelming. If you only have 10 arrows, your accuracy and likelihood of hitting your target is going to be better shooting them at 3 goals/targets than at 10. You need to narrow your list and have a final cut for the goals that are truly meaningful and relevant to your current life.

Book - *The One Thing* - Narrowing your focus is the big challenge, because there are many important things to us. Clarify what those most important things are so you can focus rather than trying to do it all and have it all- which leads to being overwhelmed. We'll get the majority of what we want by the minority of what we do- we get 80% from 20% of our time/effort.

Take to do list –

- From all things I COULD do, what are the things that I MUST/SHOULD do?
- If I could only do 1 of these things, what would the clear winner be? That is my priority.

Benjamin Franklin - worked on one attribute he wanted to enhance a little each day until he met his goal, then he would move on to the next attribute - instead of trying to work on all of them at the same time, get worn out, not make much progress, and decide to quit because it was too hard.

The fifth reason your resolutions fail is that they're easily forgotten.

Out of sight, out of mind - easy to forget our goals if we don't have a process for remembering them - this even happens in corporations that go through to create a vision, and then don't go back to them frequently. What review process do you have? Helps us adjust, spot gaps in our plan, motivates us to take action. When they're visible, your brain goes to work in figuring out how to accomplish those goals. Need to record your goals in one place (whatever works for you) and review them daily/weekly.