

# New Year's Resolutions Gone Bust? Here's Help

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Lazy young red haired woman in pajamas on sofa with laptop on her belly, looking at tennis equipment with slightly desperate look.

## Why you should care

Whether you planned get fit or get less screen time, there's a good chance you're already giving up on those goals. We've got you.

For many, January represents a blank slate, a new beginning. It's the perfect time to make some promises to yourself and plot out your best year yet. Promises such as exercising more, eating healthier, losing weight, trying less screen time and saving more money are the most popular resolutions for 2023.

However, by the time February rolls in, around 80% of New Year's resolutions are abandoned. You start smoking, scrolling, spending and snacking again.

So, how can you make your resolutions stick in 2023? Read on.

## Three Steps to Build Healthy Habits

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First, there's actual science behind developing healthy habits. You likely already engage in many positive habits each day without even thinking about them: You make your bed, eat breakfast and brush your teeth, requiring no complicated system at all. That's because you have repeated these actions until they are simply automatic and part of your routine.

You can promote any habit to routine status with some simple psychology. If you want those habits to stick, consider these three key steps: cue, routine and reward.

### **Cue**

A cue can be any trigger that reminds or prompts you to complete the habit. For example, you could:

- Set a notification on your phone reminding you to work out.
- Place your supplements beside a glass of water before you go to bed, so you can take them first thing in the morning.
- Put a colorful fruit bowl on your kitchen table to encourage you to eat well.

### **Routine**

The next part of the process is turning a positive activity into a routine. If you want to get healthier, the activity might be going to bed early, cooking more at home, exercising regularly or drinking more water.

### **Reward**

Your brain recognizes positive reinforcement and returns to habits again and again, looking for the same validation. Some habits have built-in rewards — when you go to bed early, you might wake up with more energy. You can also create rewards to encourage your brain to stick to your new habits. For instance, after you complete 10 workouts, you could buy yourself some new gym clothes. Or you could celebrate a run by enjoying coffee with friends.

There's another behavioral change concept you can use — setting SMART goals. Here's how they work.

### **Set SMART Goals**

Dr. Rachel Goldman is a psychologist, speaker and consultant who specializes in health and wellness, including health behavior change. She says setting goals that are attainable and realistic is the key to creating meaningful change. “Break down your goal into shorter-term behavioral SMART goals. Think about where you are now, and what is realistic, and start there.”

SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound.

Take your resolution or goal — *I want to be healthier*, for example — and then determine exactly what you want to achieve. What does healthy mean to you? Perhaps you'd like to exercise three times a week, eat more vegetables or take 30 minutes to destress and relax before bed.

Start small with achievable targets that align with your end goal. Promising yourself you'll work out every day or never eat chips again isn't realistic.

Goldman says it's important to keep reminding yourself of your motivation, "What's your why? Keeping that 'why' in the forefront of your mind will make it easier to accomplish your goals."

Martin Sharp is a personal trainer, fitness coach and founder of [Sharp Fit For Life](#). He suggests making your resolutions public to help keep you on track. "Make a promise to yourself, write it down and share it with other people. This will help reinforce your commitment and provide accountability with others."

Write down your personal motivation for change and put it some place where you'll see it everyday, like on your bathroom mirror, your fridge or the inside of your front door. Tell your family and friends. And if you're motivated by online support, post your goals and progress on social media.

## **See the Future**

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Another lesson from the psychology of behavior change is to [imagine your future](#). Visualizing the life you want can help you get there. Really seeing the future "you" living in a way aligned with your goals can be excellent motivation to get there. You are creating your future reward in the healthy habits you practice today.

However, future-casting doesn't just have to include a rosy view. Imagining what you don't want can be just as powerful. For example, if you can visualize future regret (eating those chips), then you can avoid unpleasant future consequences (not losing weight).

Sharp says that, regardless of the actions you take, tomorrow will come and change is an inevitable part of living. "The only thing is whether change is going to happen *to* you, and you have to accept the consequences — or whether change is going to happen *for* you, because you take control."

## ***Community Corner***

*How are your New Year's resolutions going? [Tell us about it.](#)*

