

Ashley Tignor
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One Page Brief

Resolutions are commitments or promises that a person makes to achieve their goals. There are physical, mental, and spiritual resolutions. The most common resolutions are New Year's resolutions, when people take the New Year to think about new beginnings and resolve to make improvements in their lives throughout the year. Everyone has changes they would like to make in their lives and resolutions let you make a plan of action to make those changes happen.

Most people have a hard time keeping their resolutions because they are unrealistic or are realistic but with no plan of action. Sometimes we aren't fully committed or disciplined enough to feel like we can complete our resolutions. Usually, after only a few months they fall wayside. We tell ourselves we are too busy to try right now, we doubt our ability, we realize that the goals may be unrealistic, or that the list of goals is too long to actually accomplish. No matter what our reason is, before long we are no longer committed or motivated to succeed.

All people want to improve at something in their lives, but when we suffer a setback it can be disappointing. You may want to abandon your goals completely. Thoroughly planning out your resolutions can be the key to being successful in completing them. Writing down your goals, keeping a journal or chart, or joining a support group can help to be a reminder to you of what you are working towards. A detailed action plan can help you stay focused in your goals.

A Resolution Action Plan:

Milestones: Create small milestones that will help you build up to your resolution. Successfully completing small milestones will make the big resolutions seem possible.

Rewards: Reward yourself each time you hit a milestone. This will encourage or motivate you to continue with your resolutions.

Avoid high risk situations: Avoid high risk situations where you may be tempted to fall into your old habits. These high risk situations might make it difficult to have self-control.

Distractions: When you are having a hard time keeping your resolutions find a distraction to keep you busy until you feel less tempted.

Positive attitude: A positive attitude can help you to realize that everyone has bad days. A few setbacks doesn't mean you have failed. Tomorrow is a new day.

Be accountable: Be responsible for your successes and failures. Know that ultimately it is up to you to make your resolutions a success.

The most important thing is that we make goals a priority for ourselves. We should always be continuously trying to improve our lives. Recommit yourself every day to your resolutions and each day work towards being a better you. Determination and hard work can lead to success.

Resolutions Report

Resolutions are commitments, promises, or goals that a person makes to better themselves or make a change in their lives. The most common resolutions are New Year's resolutions, which are when we take the New Year to celebrate new beginnings and resolve to make improvements in our lives. In fact, New Year's resolutions have been happening for thousands of years. "Caesar instituted January 1 as the 1st day of the year, partly to honor the month's namesake: Janus the Roman god of beginnings, whose two faces allowed him to look back into the past and forward into the future." (History.com, 2012) The beginning of starting the year off with resolutions "is thought to have caught on among the Ancient Babylonians who made promises in order to earn the favor of the gods and start the year off on the right foot." (History.com, 2012) For thousands of years, everyone has had changes they would like to make in their lives and resolutions are plans of action to make those changes happen.

There are mental, physical, and spiritual resolutions. Some examples of mental resolutions can be improving memory, becoming a better listener, reducing negativity, or being a more thoughtful person. Examples of physical resolutions are losing weight, learning a new skill, stopping smoking, or exercising regularly. Spiritual resolutions can be praying or attending church more frequently. Our resolutions should be our own individual changes we would like to make. It is important to be mindful of the areas in our lives that could use improving and resolve to make adjustments to get more enjoyment out of life.

The *American Psychological Association* website lists the all-time top three resolutions as: lose weight, quit smoking, and exercise regularly. The website also states that these goals, "account for nearly 3/4th of all goals that adults undertake January 1st." (Dingfelder, 2004) We all want to improve our lives, to live longer, and to be healthier. However, it seems that most of us make unrealistic resolutions or realistic resolutions with no plan of action. Then, after only a few months, our goals have gone wayside and we are back to our old ways. A 2002 Norcross study (as cited in Dingfelder, 2004) found that, "about 60% of people will drop their resolutions by the 6 month mark due to persistence of old habits as well as reversion to earlier stages of behavior change" and "only 19% stuck to their resolution at the 2 year mark." The key when making your resolutions is to try not to change your whole life but instead to try to change small segments of it.

It seems to be widely agreed upon that how you go about making and planning out your resolutions is the key to being successful at keeping them. In the book, *Help Yourself*, Pelzer says that to reach your goals you should, "Focus, Focus, Focus: Where are you at in your life? What are you doing to make things better? And where are you going?" (Pelzer, 2000) If you are truly determined and ready to make the changes, than you can be successful in improving yourself. An April 2002 study in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* established that, "a readiness

to change or how prepared a person is to enter the action stage of behavior change, to be the single best predictor of New Year's resolution success." (Dingfelder, 2004) You must be ready to commit yourself to your goals or it will be almost impossible to succeed.

Commonly, people will write down their resolutions but not specifically how they are going to reach them. A detailed action plan can help to determine how realistic a goal is and what needs to be done to reach it. A journal, blog, or chart can help keep track of progress. Some people may have better success using a support system or audio and visual tools as constant reminders of what they are working towards. For physical resolutions like trying to lose weight or save money an idea is, "you could keep a scrapbook for this purpose, and fill it with photos of your slimmer self, or pictures of sporting or hobby equipment you are saving for." (Collingwood, 2005) Whatever method you decide to use, it needs to remind and motivate you of what you're working towards.

A part of creating a successful resolution action plan is writing out small milestones that will help you to build up to your resolution. Checking off the small goals you have achieved will help to make it feel like you have the potential to reach the bigger ones. "You will quickly discover that when you are on the right track with yourself, there is an enormous energy that uplifts you." (McGraw, 2001) Seeing yourself completing these small milestones encourages and motivates you to continue on with your resolutions. "Conceptualize habit breaking as a process rather than an event." (Dingfelder, 2004) Our habits have been formed over a long period of time and therefore it can be expected that the process of breaking that habit will take time as well.

All people strive to be better in at least some areas of their lives but it can be a huge disappointment when we suffer a goal setback. It can make us give up on the goal entirely. In the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* found that the best way to stay focused was to, "reward behaviors and avoid high risk situations." (Dingfelder, 2004) You should pick a small reward for yourself and every time you hit your milestone, reward yourself. When you are having a weak moment you can visualize your upcoming reward to help you stay focused. If you are dieting your reward can be a small bit of whatever food you have been missing most on your diet. If you are trying to quit smoking your reward can be taking the money saved and putting towards something for yourself.

Part of sticking to a resolution is avoiding high risk situations to keep you from being tempted and falling back into your previous behavior. You can find distractions that will help you when it's the hardest to keep your resolution. If you are trying to lose weight than try to not keep your temptations, like desserts or chips, at home. If you are at a place where are serving something that is a temptation then try to find a distraction like placing a piece of gum or a mint in your mouth instead. You can also choose to have a smaller, healthier dessert as a

distraction. If you are trying to quit smoking then avoid places where other people will be smoking, so you are not tempted. At the times of day when you feel most like you need to smoke find something that will help you stay busy like call a friend, run an errand, eat a snack or play a game. These will help you stay distracted and keep your self-control at moments when it's the hardest.

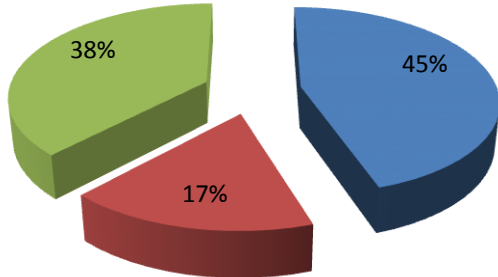
To keep a resolution it is important to have a positive attitude even if your goals and milestones aren't going exactly as planned. In the book, *Help Yourself*, Pelzer says that, "a consistent positive attitude makes a world of difference and happiness is a state of mind -your mind- so take the control." (Pelzer, 2000) If you have had a bad day and don't stick to your resolutions for that day then instead of beating yourself up about it, just tell yourself it was just a bad day. Everyone has bad days. Tomorrow will be a new day and a chance to try again. A negative attitude is only going to make you feel worse about yourself and make it almost impossible to make progress. You can't improve upon yourself while being miserable yourself. Giving in to temptation once in a while doesn't mean that your goals are ruined just that you have to keep trying.

Being accountable to yourself is a priority in keeping your resolutions. You must be responsible for your actions. "Those who blame everyone and everything apart from themselves will not have the resources needed to change." (Collingwood, 2005) You must be accountable for your own successes and failures. Realize that everyone does fail from time to time. Only you can choose to stick to a resolution, only you can truly enjoy the reward of completing a resolution, so only you should be responsible for your resolutions. That doesn't mean you can't rely on support or tools to help, just that ultimately whether you succeed at your resolutions is up to you. You can take a look at yourself to see, "how you perceive and assign responsibility for the causes that happen to you, the way you see yourself, and how you understand the world." (McGraw, 2001) This may help you determine if you have been accountable for your choices so far.

The most important thing is that we have goals for ourselves. "If we have no goals, or even the slightest amount of ambition, we will end up going nowhere." (Pelzer, 2000) You have to recommit yourself every day to your goal. If you want to make a change then you have to figure out ways to make it possible. "Seldom is there a time in your life when all is at peace and balance." (Pelzer, 2000) You can't assume that waiting by waiting around something in your life will change on its own and you will be happier. You shouldn't put off making self-improvements but instead think of, "effective strategies for positive change at any time of the year." (Dingfelder, 2004) By creating milestones, making small changes, having a positive attitude, and determination you can make keeping your resolutions successful.

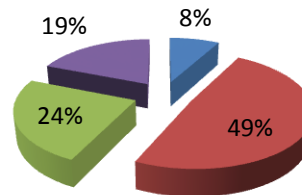
New Year's Resolutions

- Percentage of Americans who usually make New Year's resolutions
- Percentage of Americans who infrequently make New Year's resolutions
- Percentage of Americans who never make New Year's resolutions



Success of New Year's Resolutions

- Percentage of people who are successful at their resolutions
- Percentage of people who have infrequent success with their resolutions
- Percentage of people who never succeed on their resolutions each year
- Other



Length of Resolutions

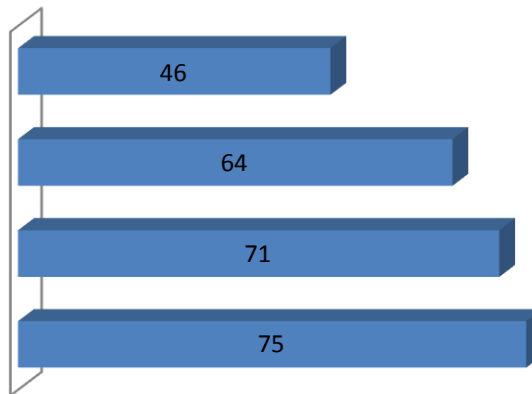
- Length of Resolutions

Percentage of people who maintained resolutions past six months

Percentage of people who maintained resolutions past one month

Percentage of people who maintained resolution past two weeks

Percentage of people who maintained resolution through first week



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Top Three Resolutions:

- 1: Exercise Regularly
- 2: Eat Better/ Lose Weight
- 3: Reduce Consumption of alcohol. Caffeine, drugs, or smoking

¹ Data is taken from <http://www.statisticbrain.com/new-years-resolution-statistics/> (2011) University of Scranton. Journal of Clinical Psychology

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