

Ask a psychotherapist

Question: Every year I make a whole lot of New Year's resolutions and every year I break most of them. Usually within the first week! Is there any point in even making them? And if there is, how can I make sure I keep them?

Answer: Part of your problem is apparent in your question. Making ?a whole lot of resolutions? at any one time is inviting failure. One at a time, please, so that success can build on success. For instance, if like many post-holiday revellers, you are feeling the effects of overindulgence in its various forms, choose to rein in one area of excess at a time. If you have been raising more glasses of cheer than is strictly good for you during the holiday season, try going without for a day or two. This gives your body a chance to recover from all the extra processing it's been doing. Think of it as a holiday for your liver, brain and other organs. When you again have a drink, think in terms of a new beginning with moderation in mind.

Similarly, if you have been inhaling desserts and sweets all season, put all those leftover goodies in a tin in the freezer and pretend for a week or so that they no longer exist. Later, thaw one here or there for a treat rather than a feast. Out of shape from too much lounging in front of the fire or TV? Heave yourself out into the snow for a walk that gets progressively longer every day. Don't hit the gym for a marathon workout on day one; work up to it over a couple of weeks. Start with any ONE of these changes until you feel even a small sense of accomplishment and then add another one. Modest resolutions, fulfilled one at a time, are more likely than dramatic schemes of sudden deprivation to add up to lasting change.

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