

# HAPPY NEW YEAR!



## New Year's Resolutions:

THE TRUTH ABOUT HOW TO MAKE THEM WORK,  
*while preserving your integrity, energy, time and money.*

**The new year can bring a mixed bag of thoughts and emotions:**

Gratitude/happy memories, resentment /anger, grief/loss and sadness, relief that a difficult year is done - complete with forebodings and/or determination to make it different for the new year.

**Generally speaking, most people fall into one of two groups when it comes to making New Year's resolutions:**

### 1. Those people who make them:

Usually a big list of resolutions fueled by great determination, perhaps based on harsh self-criticisms and sometimes on values that are not true for them individually.

### 2. Those people who "don't believe in new year's resolutions because they don't work."

Perhaps this has been true for them, particularly because they started out making new year's resolutions in the same way most people do:

- Too many.
- Too harsh.
- Not suited to their individual values.
- Not realistic in terms of their life circumstances, time, energy, or money.

In many cases, new year's resolutions made in this format set people up to fail and eventually lead them to give up on New Year's resolutions altogether.

**What you really need to do is:**

Understand that making new year's resolutions is appropriate and helpful if done so in a way that supports your integrity, energy, time and money.

**It's natural to re-assess:**

- Businesses annually re-assess.
- Doctors and their patient's re-assesses.



- Individually you re-assess all of the time – decisions, behaviours, conversations etc.

This assessing tool in the human brain is also known as **JUDGMENT**.

Functionally, judgments help us navigate our way through the world, not just for survival but also quality of life.

For example, when there is a snowstorm you re-assess your daily routine. That is, you make specific judgments about what route is best to take: what time to leave the house, if you are going to actually leave the house, what to wear and how to dress the kids. You make these judgments because you are attempting to preserve the things you value – work obligations and income needs balanced with personal and family wellness. This is otherwise known as good “survival” in the North American culture.

- Taking an assessment of the previous year and making some decisions about how you want to go about navigating your way through the new-year is a natural process.
- You can take advantage of this collective cultural phenomenon to improve your individual quality of life.

## 5 KEYS TO MAKING NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS WORK FOR YOU:

### 1. Keep your resolution list short – no more than three.

Too many resolutions can set you up for failure straight away. It is likely that your patterns of behaving, whether it is in the area of nutrition, exercise, sleep, work or relationships has been a certain way for a long time. It will take too much time, energy and frustration to change them all at once. Start with just a few small resolutions and work on them until they feel comfortable and more like a habit. Leave the others for next year or sometime during the year when you have a handle on the first few.

### 2. Base your resolutions on fair judgments, not harsh self-criticisms.

If for example you decide you want to lose “those 10lbs” you gained last year when you went through a difficult time and ate a bit more than usual because it was your way of getting through, then in this case you can come from one of two different mind-sets:

- Self-critical: *I am fat and shouldn't have done that.*
- Fair judgment: *Yeah, that was a tough time. I was trying to nurture myself then because I was in a lot of emotional pain. I feel I have moved through a lot of my grief but I can still make space to hold it gently in my heart, while I do things that support my health this year. I will accept myself as I am and the weight might naturally come off as I start to get back to a healthier routine.*

**Studies show that fair judgment decisions will have the best long – term outcomes.**

### 3. Keep your resolutions in alignment with what you truly value, not what others value.

If for example your resolution is to see a naturopathic doctor this year in order to help you with your health problems, but your spouse or other family members thinks that is a silly idea, go anyway! Only you are responsible for your body and health. Listen to your heart and follow it. Those around you might lament and criticize but this may stop once your health problems have resolved and you start feeling great.

### 4. Be specific: outline exactly how you will implement the resolutions into your life.

No matter how determined you are, I am willing to bet that the circumstances of your life this year will not be much different than last. Work obligations remain, the bills still need to be paid, the house requires its regular upkeep, the kids are still busy with school and extra-curricular activities and your relationship challenges have not disappeared. In light of this, it is important that you make realistic goals that can fit into your schedule without burning you, your energy or money out. For example, if you know that more physical activity would be healthy for you and your resolution is to “exercise more this year” then great! But, be more specific! E.g. “I will do 20minutes of walking

outdoors or on a treadmill 3 days per week". Specify even further: "My 20 min. walks will happen on: Monday at 7am, Wednesday at 5pm, Saturday at 10am" etc. Lay out a plan, put it in your day timer and commit to it.

Also, if you haven't exercised regularly for years don't buy an expensive gym membership with the hopes that the financial commitment will get you exercising more. Save your money! My experience with most people is that although this technique might be helpful in the short-term, over time it can set you up for failure because your commitment came more from your bankbook and self-criticisms than your heart. Having said that, if you have a specific plan of which days you will go to the gym and which classes you will take and your resolution comes firstly from your genuine desire to take better care of yourself, then a gym membership might be exactly what you are looking for.

**Studies show that specific goal planning has higher probabilities of long-term success.**

#### **5. Surrender. A lot of what happens in life is completely out of your control!**

Ugh! Tough to swallow I know. Gulp. Breathe. It's ok. Although it is universal law that you will not be able to make this year happen exactly the way you want, you are still in charge of one important thing – yourself! There are many blessings that come when you can take a healthy, fair judging sense of responsibility for your own physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness.

### **FOLLOW THESE 5 KEY STEPS WHEN MAKING YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS AND YOU WILL BE SURE TO HAVE A BETTER CHANCE AT SUCCEEDING THIS YEAR.**

A wise person once said to me...."**SET YOURSELF UP TO WIN!**" - I think it is astonishing how many North Americans do not set themselves up to win. Perhaps because of a strong drive for more and better, which can make us demanding, impatient and impulsive with our decisions that are not in alignment with our true values. As a result, many people can end up tired and

frustrated when they "fail", but all the while they set themselves up for it.

**Setting yourself up to win means taking a bit of time to genuinely and fairly reflect on the past year in terms of your own health, while making a few authentic resolutions that might bring you a better quality of life this year.**

### **My best wishes to you for a healthier, happier year.**

If you like this article and want to share it or know someone who would benefit from its contents please do pass it on.



Heidi McGill is a registered doctor of naturopathic medicine. She has helped dozens of families discover their best balance for overall wellness in body and mind, using the principles and practices of naturopathic medicine. She offers seminars and writes

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