

# Keeping New Year's Resolutions

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2014 is right around the corner. It seems that January 1 of each year serves as a reminder for us to make commitments to living our lives in a (hopefully) healthier and more affirming fashion. Resolutions traditionally have a poor track record because change is **HARD!**

Whether you are making a resolution that will kick off in a few days or you are deciding to make a change at any other time of year, try some of the following ideas to help you increase your success:



1. **Yell it from the rooftops!** We are more likely to follow through when we know that others might be disappointed to learn that we are not doing what we said we would. Make it more appealing to do that hard thing than to have to tell that special someone that you have given up on your goal.
2. **Start small.** We tend to get over zealous with grandiose goals about doing something new perfectly. When we set goals that are too hard to accomplish, we tend to give up at the first sign of struggle or feel upset with ourselves when we have a slip and decide that change is hopeless. Pick small, attainable goals at first and work your way up to those bigger ones. For example, if your goal is to have a more loving relationship with your partner, you might try giving that person one compliment every day for a week as your first goal.
3. **Be specific.** It is difficult to decide exactly how we should, “be a better person,” or “be happier.” When resolutions are vague, we are less likely to make the concrete changes that will lead to our ultimate success in meeting them. If your resolution is imprecise in nature, take some time to identify specific things that relate to it. For example, if your resolution is to “be happier,” make a resolution to list 3 things you are grateful for daily or to intentionally find the silver lining when you are feeling pessimistic.
4. **Patience is a virtue.** One reason New Year’s Resolutions fail is because we expect immediate changes for behaviors that took several years (even a lifetime) to create. Change is not usually straightforward, nor is it effortless. Don’t give up at the first mistake. Instead, learn what you can about why you slipped and use it to prevent future mishaps.
5. **Get support.** Sharing your struggles with someone else who understands you can be extremely helpful in sticking to your objective. Others can help motivate you to stay on track and empathize about the hard parts. They are also a source of great ideas for how to keep you going when it might seem impossible to continue. Consider talking to a close friend, joining a group, finding an online chat specific to what you are changing, or talking with a therapist.