

Four Secrets to Keeping Your Resolutions This Year



Research indicates that by mid-February, 80% of people who make New Year Resolutions have already given up on them and by the end of the year only about 9% of people succeed in reaching the goals they set earlier in the year! That's pretty discouraging. If you want to break the trend by setting and keeping your new year resolutions or getting traction on your personal goals in general, here are some tips:

1. **Get Real.** There's a big difference between a resolution-setting and wishful-thinking. Setting resolutions is about goal setting and a good goal is actually do-able. It's not just an aspiration; there's reason to believe you can achieve it even if it feels daunting. So, don't set your sights so high that you set yourself up for failure. It's far more productive and rewarding to set and achieve a smaller goal and then set another than to labor unsuccessfully and discouragingly on one that's too big to begin with.
2. **Focus on Behaviors (not Outcomes):** In the same way that a successful journey is less about the destination than it is the steps you take along the way, achieving a resolution isn't as much about the outcome as it is the behaviors that will move you towards it. For this reason, shift your focus from the big, exciting place you want to reach to the smaller, less sexy things you *need to do* in order to reach it. Identify the specific choices or behaviors that when done repeatedly will inexorably move you to your goal and focus on doing them. Don't waste your attention on the destination or your distance from it. Instead, focus on where you are now and simply take the next step. Celebrate each of these smaller successes or achievements and repeat them until you discover you've reached the goal you initially envisioned.
3. **Friction is your Friend.** The truth is: self-change is a game of physics, not philosophy. We tend to move in the low-drag directions that are easy and pleasing to us and we don't do the things that are hard, inconvenient, or uncomfortable for us. Use this to your advantage and reduce the "friction" of desired directions— try to make it as easy and convenient as possible to do the vital behaviors you've identified. Conversely, increase the friction (i.e., inconvenience, effort, etc.) of the behaviors, choices, or directions that could distract or derail you from your goals.
4. **Willpower is Overrated.** Willpower is admirable and an important factor in resolution-keeping, but it's also one of the weaker and more uncooperative forces at our disposal. It's hard to gin-up greater commitment or discipline when we need it, and we always know the best way to talk ourselves out of our best intentions. Instead of relying on your *inner* strength, harness *outer* things to move you in the right direction. Change elements of your environment or circumstances so they foster your goals and limit your opportunities to stray from the path. Leverage relationships to support you, create accountability and encouragement, or limit the peer pressure that pulls you wrong directions.