

New Year's Resolutions — A “Set-Up” for Failure?

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There's something about the New Year that spurs fantasies of self reform! Though we are physically exhausted, emotionally depleted and at least five pounds heavier than before the Holiday Barrage began, the thoughts of a brand New Year fill our spirits with optimism and give us a remarkable ability to bounce back and start anew with good intentions.

Unfortunately, even with the best intentions, New Year's resolutions are often a “set up” for failure. It's easy to become plagued with guilt when we don't live up to our idealistic and unrealistic goals. To quote Mark Twain, “New Year's day... is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving the road to hell with them as usual.”

Why is it so hard to make and keep resolutions for change? “Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.” (Jim Robins) If we want to make changes from our old ways, we need to create new habits of behavior.

To change a habit or create a new one, first take an inventory of what you are doing and what you would like to change. The key to change is awareness. Become aware of the behavior you want to change, how often it occurs, and what triggers it. Then, make a commitment to change or replace that behavior. Changing a habit requires persistence.

Some important things to remember are to set realistic, achievable goals (small change is better than no change), share your goals and progress with a support person, forgive yourself for “slopping” (and start again), and reward yourself for successes.

Then New Year can be a time for new beginnings. Set your intensions and practice these steps. Ask for help if you need it.