

The Secret to Following Through With Your Resolutions

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During this time of year, a popular topic is always setting New Year's resolutions. You'll find tons of articles on how to set goals, how to stay on track and even how to get back on track if you lose focus. These are all important considerations. But sometimes we need to go deeper to be effective. Sometimes we need to know not just what we want to do and how we should do it, but *why*.

It's easy to say that you want to live a healthier lifestyle. That's the "what." And it is easy to resolve that you want to accomplish this by eating healthier, exercising more and attending to more self-care. That's the general "how-to." And you can break down each of these steps into detail in pursuit of your goal. But the third critical step in the equation for long-term success is often to ask and answer why this is a goal.

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Answer the "why"

Answering the "why" gives purpose and meaning to not only the goal itself, but to all of the effort you will be putting in to achieve it. It's the motivation and inspiration behind every healthy meal, every trip to the gym, every book you read and anything else you take the time to do to live a healthier lifestyle. And it is often what we fail to articulate when

setting New Year's resolutions.

There are lots of reasons why one might want to lead a healthier lifestyle – more energy, to look and feel better, to be able to participate in long-dormant activities, to model healthier behavior for our loved ones, to live longer. The list is seemingly endless, and no one reason is more important than the other. It is about what is important to the individual. But knowing the reason why and clearly articulating it to yourself is vitally important. It serves as a constant reminder and motivator. It allows you to effectively share it with others. And it serves to help remove or avoid distractions that get in your way.

Making more money is a common resolution. People want to be better compensated for the work they do; they want to feel more appreciated; they want better financial security. Again, all good reasons to want to achieve this goal. But dig deeper – what is truly at the heart of why you want to make more money? What is the next layer? Do you want to be able to start saving and investing toward retirement? Do you want to reduce stress? Do you want to start saving for a college fund or a house? Why exactly is more money important to you? What is at the heart of your goal?

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How to maximize your results

Resolutions should not be an isolated endeavor. In fact, studies show that sharing your goals with others and engaging others in the ongoing pursuit of your goals yields a much higher likelihood of success. So, there are five critical questions we should ask to maximize the results we want to achieve:

Question 1: Why is this resolution truly important to me? Go deep, and be honest with yourself.

Question 2: How do I make this happen? This should be the specific steps you need to implement. This often comes down to forming positive habits and/or replacing bad habits. It is about discipline and accountability. You need to identify these things in a clear and precise manner before moving on to question 3.

Question 3: Who should be on your team? There is no special award for doing things on your own, and asking for help or partnering with others does not diminish your success. At its core, life is about the relationships we build along our journey, and embracing a team for your goals is just another opportunity to forge new bonds. Your team member(s) should be people who are supportive, honest and can directly contribute to the steps you have spelled out in question 2.

Question 4: When am I honestly ready to start? Pursuing goals is not a linear process without its share of challenges along the way. But momentum is a real thing, and you do not want to start knowing it is not an ideal time to do so. It is vital to ensure you are in the right mindset to begin. That is why the first three questions are so important. But, simultaneously, do not look for excuses or reasons to put off your start. There is no such thing as a perfect time. It is when you decide you are ready and committed.

Question 5: What comes next? There is a natural feeling of accomplishment when you reach a goal, often followed by a bit of a letdown because you have been focused on one thing for so long that it now begs the question of what comes next. This is why resolutions or goals should be seen as lifestyle changes rather than start-to-finish tasks. You can tell yourself, "I want to lose 10 pounds." You can identify why and who is on your team and how you are going to accomplish it. But in reality, the loss of the weight should be a result of a change in a lifestyle choice that survives the benchmark of the weight loss.

The healthier eating, exercising, etc. that got you to that goal is now a new lifestyle for you. The same concept can be applied if you want to save \$100,000 for a house. When you implement a strategy of saving and investing to achieve this goal and bring in the right people to help, there is no reason to stop once you have reached the initial goal. It is a newly formed lifestyle choice you have developed.

Ultimately, the real secret to resolutions is that the process you go through to achieve the goal becomes a permanent part of your lifestyle.

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