

How To Achieve Your Goals In 2016

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The new year is about to start, which means that it's time. Time to get off the couch and into your running shoes. Time to start off fresh and to finally make a change. **New year, new chance, new you.**

The first of January is a special date. Not only is it the beginning of a new year, but even more so, the time where people stop making excuses and start taking action. With new found motivation, they commit themselves to finally tackle their problem areas.

New Year's Resolution

The tradition to make a new year's resolution is quite old. And with old, I mean reaaaalllllyyy oooooold. Believe it or not, even the ancient Babylonians, 4000 years ago, made promises about paying back their debts at the start of each year. Nowadays, the resolutions are more diverse.

People set all kinds of goals about changing their life in the year to come. Most popular are improvements in health, wealth, education, and relationships. Yet when it comes to actually fulfilling these goals, the reality looks quite dim.

Out of all the people that make resolutions, 25% already quit after trying for a single week. By the end of January the number has risen to 33%. And at the end of the year, out of everyone who made a resolution, only 8% succeeded in their goal. **Only 8%!**

So achieving your new year's resolution is no easy matter, and in fact quite difficult. But what do the lucky 8% know, that the unlucky 92% don't? And how can you prevent ending up in the latter group?

I'll show you.

And it all starts by choosing your goal.

Part 1: Choose Your Goal

You probably have already something in mind. Something that has been bothering you for quite some time or something that you always wanted to do. Maybe you never dared to, maybe you didn't know how, or maybe you simply never cared enough.

Whatever it is, now is the time to make it your goal.

Notice how I wrote "goal" and not "goals". The reason for this is simple: Oftentimes we sabotage ourselves by choosing too many goals at once. Our [willpower](#) is a limited supply and if we work on too many areas at once, we simply get overwhelmed. We deplete our energies too soon and quickly lose sight of our good intentions. Choosing too many goals is a surefire way to reach none of them. So instead: **choose only one goal.**

In addition, make sure that the goal is important to you. Out everyone who failed to reach their resolution, 23% simply forgot what their goal is. Can you imagine that? They simply forgot about their goal because it was seemingly not important enough. Choose a goal that is important for you and that you are actually committed to fulfill. **The more important, the better.**

Choose Only One Important Goal

Part 2: Define Your Goal

Now that you've got a goal, we can bring it into shape. Although it might be hard to believe, the way you define your goal separates those who succeed from those who fail. I'll show you what I mean.

#1 Positive

Do me a favor for a minute: Try to NOT think of a pink elephant for as long as you can. Ready? Go!

How did you do? In all likelihood you didn't even last a couple of seconds. And there's a good reason for it: Your brain can't process negatives.

He knows that you're thinking about him



When we have something in mind that we are not allowed to do, we tend to think about it even more. When you think "Don't smoke cigarettes", all your brain will be processing is "smoke cigarettes". As a result, it will be much harder to resist temptation and to stay committed to your goal.

So instead, define your goal in a positive way. Decide what you DO want instead of what you don't want. Choose "I want to become fit" instead of "I don't want to be overweight", choose "I want to eat more healthy" instead of "I want to stop eating junk-food". You get the idea.

Define Your Goal In A Positive Way

It's a subtle difference, but nonetheless an important one.

#2 Measurable

When you hear "I want to become more fit", do you know what to do? No? Me neither.

If we formulate our goals in an abstract, complex way, they will stay exactly this: abstract and complex. Instead of goals, they will be vague aims that we hopefully achieve one day, once the stars are aligned in our favor. But we have no time to wait for the stars, so instead we need to take matters into our own hands.

Make Your Goal Specific And Measurable

What does it mean to become "more fit"? What does it mean to "eat more healthy?" Define your goals **as specific as possible** so that you can actually **track your progress**. "More fit" might mean to lose 5 kilogram, it might mean to be able to run 10 kilometers under an hour, it might mean to finally get them six pack abs.

Make your goal specific, make your goal measurable, and you have made your goal accessible.

#3 Realistic

Out of everyone who gave up on their resolution, 35% claimed it was due to unrealistic goals. They simply wanted too much, too soon. They wanted to turn from couch-potato to iron-man in a matter of weeks and then got demotivated when they didn't see the results they were hoping for.

Although you might laugh at this, it is nothing short of the norm. In general, people overestimate their likelihood of succeeding and underestimate their likelihood of failing. This is called the [overconfidence](#)-effect.

Prevent yourself from falling into this trap by **starting off small**. You can always improve from there, yet it's important to keep the bar where you can reach it.

Make Your Goal Realistic

#4 Within Control

Lastly, no goal will be motivating if it lies beyond your control. If you aim to become the most popular kid in town, chances are you won't succeed. Why? Because you have no control over the outcome.

Yes you can talk to everyone, and yes you can give out compliments. But ultimately, you have no control over whether people will like you or not. If you don't get the feedback that you want, you will quickly become discouraged and, in the worst case, abandon your goal at all.

Instead do this:

Make Your Goal Within Your Control

Define your goal in a way that is completely in your control. *"Becoming more popular"* isn't, *"talking to 1 stranger a day"* is. *"Losing 5 pounds"* isn't, *"working out twice a week"* is. Choose goals that are completely in your control and you will control your goal instead of your goal controlling you.

Part 3: Achieve Your Goal

Now that you have defined a good goal, it's time to bring it into action.

#1 Set Up A Plan

Remember this one thing: No goal has gotten anyone anywhere without a proper plan. You have made the effort to write down your goal in a way that it motivates you. Now go the rest of the way by actually writing how to turn it into reality.

Set Up A Plan To Reach Your Goal

Write down **what to do**, **when you'll do it**, and **how you'll do it**. For instance, you can write down in your calendar that every day after breakfast, you will meditate for 10 minutes. Or you might decide that every Wednesday and every Saturday you will work out for 1 hour. Whatever it is, write it down and you're almost there.

#2 Review Daily

Of those who failed with their resolutions, 33% reported that they didn't keep track of their progress. They simply aimed for betterment without ever keeping track of whether they are still on their path. Don't let this be you.

If you want to make a change, you'll need to review in how far you are still on your way and whether you need to adjust your approach. In addition, reviewing your progress will keep you motivated because it shows you what you already accomplished. Nothing beats the temptation of eating a muffin like seeing that you would break a streak of 2 weeks.

Review Your Plan Daily

Build it into your routine to keep track of your plan. Maybe after showering, maybe after breakfast. Check in daily what you have to do for the day so that you make sure that a) you'll know what to do, and b) you'll be motivated to do it.

#3 Revise Plan

Lastly, there is no shame to admit that you miscalculated. Sometimes we guessed wrong and there are circumstances we can't control. In this instance it's not helpful to stick with a plan that simply doesn't work.

Revise Your Plan If Necessary

Go back to the drawing board if necessary and revise your plan. Maybe you need to redefine your goal, maybe you need to redefine your approach. Whatever it is, it's definitely better than sticking with a plan that is not working out.

Last Words in 2015

If you want to achieve your goals in 2016, your resolutions must follow certain guidelines. Make sure to focus only on one important goal at a time. When you define your goal, define it in a way that is positive, specific, realistic, and within your control.

To turn this goal into reality, you'll need to devise a plan about what you'll do and how you'll do it. Review this plan on a daily basis to ensure that you're staying on track. Lastly, revise the plan if necessary, so that it applies to your abilities and circumstances. Don't let your resolutions fade this year, but make them strong commitments and show that you're worth being in the 8%.

Happy New Year!

