

# Ready, set, go!

We all do it: make New Year's resolutions in January and then break them within the month (or week). **Here's how to make them stick ...**

By Dina Cramer

**S**omehow we got swept up in the rat race of the old year. Treading water to keep from drowning in the busyness of our lives, we ended up going through the motions, promising ourselves that when we became less busy or less stressed we'd lose weight, stop smoking, spend more quality time with our families ... the list goes on. But before we knew it, the year was gone, and we hadn't ticked any goals off our list.

Now at the beginning of another year, with its sense of a fresh start, we once again vow to commit to the changes that will make our lives happier, healthier, more meaningful. These are my three top tactics for finally getting your resolutions to stick.

## **1 Set a specific and inspiring goal**

The reason why most resolutions fail is that we have not connected with the "why" of the goal and we haven't got a good enough reason to achieve it. For example, if someone offers you a piece of cake while you're dieting, it's easier to say no if you're trying to slim down for your upcoming wedding than if you're trying to lose weight for no particular reason.

This is because you have a clear, specific, inspiring goal. You can see yourself looking good in your wedding dress and that is more enticing than the cake. On the other hand, if you want to lose weight for no specific reason, and you have not connected to the goal emotionally and visually, you may be more likely

to give in to temptation. To increase the odds that you'll ace a goal, take time to visualise how you'll feel once you achieve it. Imagine how reaching this goal will enhance your life – you need to actually see it. Try to link it to a special occasion. See yourself at that event, dressed in beautiful clothes, looking good, interacting confidently and happily with the people there. Make it feel real.

**Quick tip** Take a couple of minutes every day to visualise and connect with your goal. You can even put a motivational picture close by to inspire you whenever you look at it. If your visualisation is real and inspiring enough, meeting your goal will be more enticing than the short-term gratification you may get from breaking your resolve.



## **2 Set daily deliberate actions**

In his book, *The Slight Edge*, Jeff Olsen explains why only 5% of people are successful. He uses the idea of compound interest to explain that simple disciplines repeated consistently over time create success, while simple errors in judgment or poor choices repeated over time lead to failure.

The problem is that small errors in judgement don't impact us immediately but have a big impact over time. For example, eating a burger today won't kill you. However, if you consistently eat burgers, over time it might negatively affect your health. Choosing to not exercise today won't do any damage, but making that choice consistently over time will shorten your lifespan.

He goes on to say that the activities that create success are so simple and easy to do that they are also easy not to do, and that is where the problem comes in. We think that if we make a bad choice today we can remedy it tomorrow. Chances are, we will make that same poor choice again and again because it seems insignificant. But compounded over time, it becomes significant. The more we make poor choices, the faster we slide down the slippery slope of failure.

We can use this positively too. If we make good choices consistently over time, we create health, happiness and success. For example, you go out with a friend for lunch. You really feel like a burger but you choose to have a salad. Making the healthier choice consistently over time will create success. Jeff calls these "daily deliberate actions". It is not about the grand gestures, which New Year's resolutions tend to be. It is about the small daily, deliberate actions we take towards our goal. It is better to exercise five minutes every day than one hour a week. It will compound over time and create more success. .

**Quick tip** Before you do something, ask yourself: *Will this bring me closer or further away from my goal?* Then make the choices that will help you reach your goal.

### **3 Apply the principle of integrity**

Integrity is the fuel that gets us to where we want to go. We have very little control over our thoughts and feelings. Thoughts just pop into our head whether we like them or not. We also have an immediate, emotional reaction to events, and it is very hard to control these emotions.

The one thing we do have complete control over is our words. We can consciously choose every word we utter. It's possible to change our current reality by changing our words and committing to them instead of being controlled by our thoughts and feelings. For example, you want to get healthier, so you decide to exercise every morning. But when your alarm goes off at 5am, you think, *I don't feel like exercising. I had a late night. I've got a busy day. I will exercise tomorrow.* Sound familiar? Integrity means doing what you say you will do, by the time you say you'll do it. In order to have integrity you need to commit to your words, not to your thoughts and feelings.

This is important because our subconscious brain is like a computer. It records everything we say, think and do, and stores this information. Every time we say we are going to do something and we don't, our brains

take note of this, affecting our self-esteem.

What's more, this subconscious brain is completely factual and objective. It does not take excuses into account. For example, if you say you will be somewhere at 5pm and you arrive a minute late, were you there at 5pm? No. Your subconscious mind notes that you failed to be there on time, no matter what your excuse was.

Our brains rate us according to how often we keep our word. Then when we set ourselves a goal, they work out our expected success according to the stats. For example, if you keep your word 60% of the time and your goal is to earn R40,000 per month, your brain will aim for 60% of this because this is what it believes you are capable of earning. Therefore, the higher your integrity level, the more likely you are to achieve exactly what you want to achieve.

**Quick tip** Cultivate integrity by delivering on promises made to yourself and others. **HI**

»————→ **Dina Cramer** is an executive coach specialising in the area of leadership development. To find out more about coaching and public or corporate workshops, visit [singlemom-superwoman.com](http://singlemom-superwoman.com)

*You need to create an inspiring goal and connect emotionally and visually to it*