

Successful New Year's Resolutions Start in the Mind

The first of the year rings in another opportunity to set a New Year's resolution. For many, sticking to a resolution can be a breeze in the beginning, but as the year progresses, it becomes harder and harder to stay committed. It doesn't have to be that way. An osteopathic physician from outlines how to set a realistic resolution and stick to it by mentally preparing yourself.

"People who are unsuccessful in keeping a New Year's Resolution often have problems identifying what they see as their final result," says our consulting physician. "People might resolve to lose weight, keep a clean house, or spend more time with their children, but they don't put their goals into concrete, realistic terms, such as losing 10 pounds, cleaning the house every other Sunday, or spending an hour a night playing a game or doing homework with their children. This lack of specificity can quickly lead to a failed resolution."

To break the cycle of setting up then giving up on a New Year's resolution, our physician outlines some tips for developing a realistic resolution and staying mentally strong all year long:

1. **Define Your Goal.** Develop a time frame for your goal, with smaller goals to achieve along the way. For example, a goal of working out for 30 minutes every day should start with a small step such as 15 minutes every other day to work your way up to your goal. "When you are specific about what steps it will take to get you to your overall goal, your resolution will become easier to achieve," says the doctor. "Make sure you can commit to the goal in the timeframe you give yourself."
2. **Have mental toughness.** Not every day is going to be easy. Knowing this ahead of time will prepare you for when you are tempted to break your resolution. "Have the power to keep moving towards your goal, no matter what setbacks may occur. When the going gets tough, get tougher," says the doctor.
3. **Think positive.** Thinking positively is a great trick when it comes to overcoming a bad habit, according to our consulting physician. "The voice inside your head needs to be thinking positive thoughts. Your own words of encouragement can eliminate self doubt and will help when it's tempting to fall back into old patterns," the doctor says.
4. **Be patient.** Permanently changing your behavior can take months. You need to make a conscious effort to stay on track through the long process. "It takes more than just a physical action; mentally prepare yourself by accepting that it will take time to change," says the doctor.
5. **Forward thinking.** "Identify what went wrong in previous failed attempts at resolutions and then move on," says our physician. Don't focus on what you have done in the past, only what you want to have in the future. "Picture what you want your end result to be. The feeling of future success should lead you forward," the doctor says.
6. **Choose not to fail.** "No one but you can make your resolution happen," says the doctor. Choose not to let mistakes derail you, take a day off every once in a while, power through the tough times, and see your end result. "When you make the decision to succeed, you leave no room to fail," the doctor says

Keeping track of a resolution all year long can be difficult, but only if you let it. "Keep positive to enforce your positive change," says our consulting physician. Use these tips as tools to keep you on track to a successful resolution. "The important thing is to remember that successfully changing your behavior comes from the inside out. Accept that it will take small steps in the right direction to have a positive outcome," our physician concludes.

Preventive medicine is just one aspect of care osteopathic physicians provide. DOs are fully licensed to prescribe medicine and practice in all specialty areas, including surgery. DOs are trained to consider the health of the whole person and use their hands to help diagnose and treat their patients.