

Why New Year's Resolutions Fail

How Yours Can Be Different



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Studies show that by February, 80 percent of New Year's resolutions have been abandoned. So how do you make sure yours are among the 20 percent that are kept longer than a couple of months?

Psychologists say it's important to focus not on the goal but on the *process* of change. New Year's resolutions often fail because they encourage a *goal-oriented*, rather than a *process-oriented* approach. It's not about achieving a single goal, it's about developing a habit or set of habits that result in the desired goal(s).

"The process of change starts with understanding that a behavior is producing negative consequences," says Dr. Michele Nealon, Psy.D., President of The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. "Then comes the internal negotiation—evaluating the pros and cons of changing. When you decide to change, then comes preparation, and this is critical—set yourself up for success."

"Next, decide your action steps and how you plan to maintain or modify these steps over time," she adds. "Finally, plan for falling off the wagon—and get right back on track."

According to Dr. Nealon, this process can take weeks or months, so that is another reason why New Year's resolutions often don't work. "It's difficult to wake up one day and suddenly decide you will change a long-held habit or practice," she says. "Better to give yourself some time to think over the entire process and make sure that you are committed to change."

She offers five tips for increasing chances of successful change include:

1. Make change actionable and measurable
2. Create a plan for incremental change; taking small steps to start
3. Challenge yourself to be accountable or find an accountability partner
4. Be forgiving; when you inevitably fall off the wagon, get back up

About The Chicago School of Professional Psychology:

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Contact Details

Vivien Hao

+1 323-893-4743

vhao@thechicagoschool.edu

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