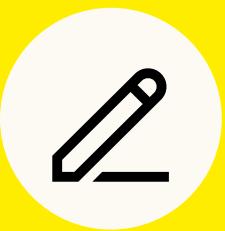




New Year's Resolutions: *How To Make Them Stick*



The Resolution Trap

New Year's Resolutions. We always make them with the best intentions, but rarely do they last long. The gyms fill up, new hobbies are started, and social media buzzes with declarations of transformation.

Yet by mid-February, most of these ambitious plans have quietly faded away. Research from a recent study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* found that 23% of people

abandon their resolutions within the first week, and 43% give up by the end of January.

So what goes wrong? The problem often isn't a lack of motivation or willpower. It's that resolutions are frequently too vague, too ambitious, or disconnected from the reality of daily life. "Get fit," "eat healthier," or "save more" sound positive, but they lack the specificity and structure needed to translate intention into action.





The Psychology of Behaviour Change

Understanding how behaviour change actually works can make all the difference. Behavioural psychology shows that sustainable change happens through small, consistent actions rather than dramatic overhauls. The concept of “implementation intentions” – planning exactly when, where, and how you’ll do something – significantly increases the likelihood of follow-through. Instead of “I’ll exercise more,” a better approach is “I’ll walk for 20 minutes every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning before work.”

Habit formation also requires patience. A study published in the European Journal of Social Psychology found that it takes an average of 66 days for a new behaviour to become automatic, though this varies widely depending on the person and the behaviour. The early weeks are the hardest, which is why so many resolutions don’t last long.

Understanding this helps set realistic expectations – change takes time, and setbacks are normal, not failures.

Making Resolutions Realistic and Sustainable

The most successful goals are **SMART**: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. But beyond this framework, it’s worth asking yourself why a goal matters to you. If you’re pursuing something because you feel you “should” rather than because you genuinely want to, motivation will be hard to sustain. External pressure – whether from social media, family expectations, or workplace culture – rarely leads to lasting change.

It’s also important to focus on adding positive behaviours rather than only eliminating negative ones.

“Drink more water” is more beneficial than “stop drinking fizzy drinks.” Building new habits creates momentum, whereas deprivation can feel punishing and unsustainable.



Practical Tips for Sustainable Goal-Setting

- **Start small:** Choose one or two goals rather than overhauling your entire life. Small wins build confidence and momentum.
- **Be specific:** “Exercise three times per week for 30 minutes” is more actionable than “get fit.”
- **Plan for obstacles:** Identify what might get in the way and have a backup plan. If you can’t make it to the gym, what’s your at-home alternative?
- **Track progress:** Whether it’s a journal, an app, or ticking off a calendar, visual progress is motivating.
- **Build in accountability:** Share your goals with a friend, join a group, or find an accountability partner.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Acknowledge progress along the way rather than waiting for the end goal.
- **Be kind to yourself:** Setbacks happen. What matters is getting back on track, not achieving perfection.

This January, rather than chasing an idealised version of yourself, focus on building habits that support the life you want to live. Because the best resolution is one that still matters to you come next December.