

## Happy New Year!

As we flip the calendar to a new year, many people also take the opportunity to assess their lives and set new goals in the form of New Year's resolutions. Among the most popular goals are drink less alcohol, eat healthy food, get fit, manage debt, manage stress, and save money, according to USA.gov.

This edition of the "Frontline Focus" includes insightful stories about assessing, setting and keeping goals.

## Ten Tips for Setting (And Keeping) Life Changing Resolutions

It's time for that annual ritual of making (and breaking) our New Year's resolutions. There is something about the idea of being able to start over that motivates us to pause (at least briefly) and reflect on our lives as they are, as well as how we would like them to be.

Yet how many times have you thought back to last year's goals and found that many or most of them were abandoned or just forgotten after a few months into the year?

Many of us have difficulty following through on our resolutions due to factors such as choosing unrealistic goals, not making them challenging enough and/or lacking the necessary motivation to stick with them.

The following tips should help put you on the right course and assist you in staying committed to your most important goals for the year.

**Start with a life vision.** If you don't know what you want your future to look like, how can you decide what areas of your life need to be worked on? Spend some quiet time TODAY reflecting on (and writing down) what is good, bad or incomplete. Then try to "see" your life IF all of these areas were addressed and had become satisfactory to you.

**Get organized.** Clear away clutter. Go through paperwork, files, old bills and receipts, closets, drawers and storage containers. Decide what you need and will use and either throw out or give away all the rest. Put aside some time each week for this purpose. Focus on one area (or box) at a time until you are finished. Having available file drawer space, trash bags, file folders and pens handy will speed things along. Try not to handle anything more than once. Make a decision and act on it immediately. After you have cleaned out you can think about your existing systems for management and

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storage and see if these need reworking or just some fine-tuning. Make sure you use ONE calendar to record everything. Otherwise you will either overbook, miss appointments and events or just waste a lot of time trying to constantly go back, re-do and sort out your schedule.

**Expand your horizons and make a commitment to learning something new.** Challenging yourself will infuse you with greater energy and sense of purpose. It will help build your self-esteem to realize you are capable of more than you had previously believed. This new learning can also give you additional resources to assist you in your career, personal or love life.

**Set challenging but realistic resolutions.** Choose goals that stretch your ability muscles, yet are realistic and therefore less vulnerable to failure. Don't respond to that negative inner voice that says; "Oh, I'm not capable of that." Instead, focus on what you truly desire for your life and relationships and let this be your guide.

**Write down your resolutions.** Write them down and stick them on your bathroom mirror, your fridge, your car dashboard, your desk or wherever you know will be a good place for you to see them. You can also show them to a good friend, family member, your coach or anyone who could provide support and encouragement.

**Create action steps for each resolution; write these down, and keep an accounting of your progress for each.** A resolution without planned action is doomed to failure. Break each goal down into small action steps or objectives. Putting a date for completion will help ensure you follow through. Come up with an accountability system that will work for you. Make sure you check off each accomplishment as you go and be flexible and willing to make adjustments in your action steps in order to achieve your desired end results.

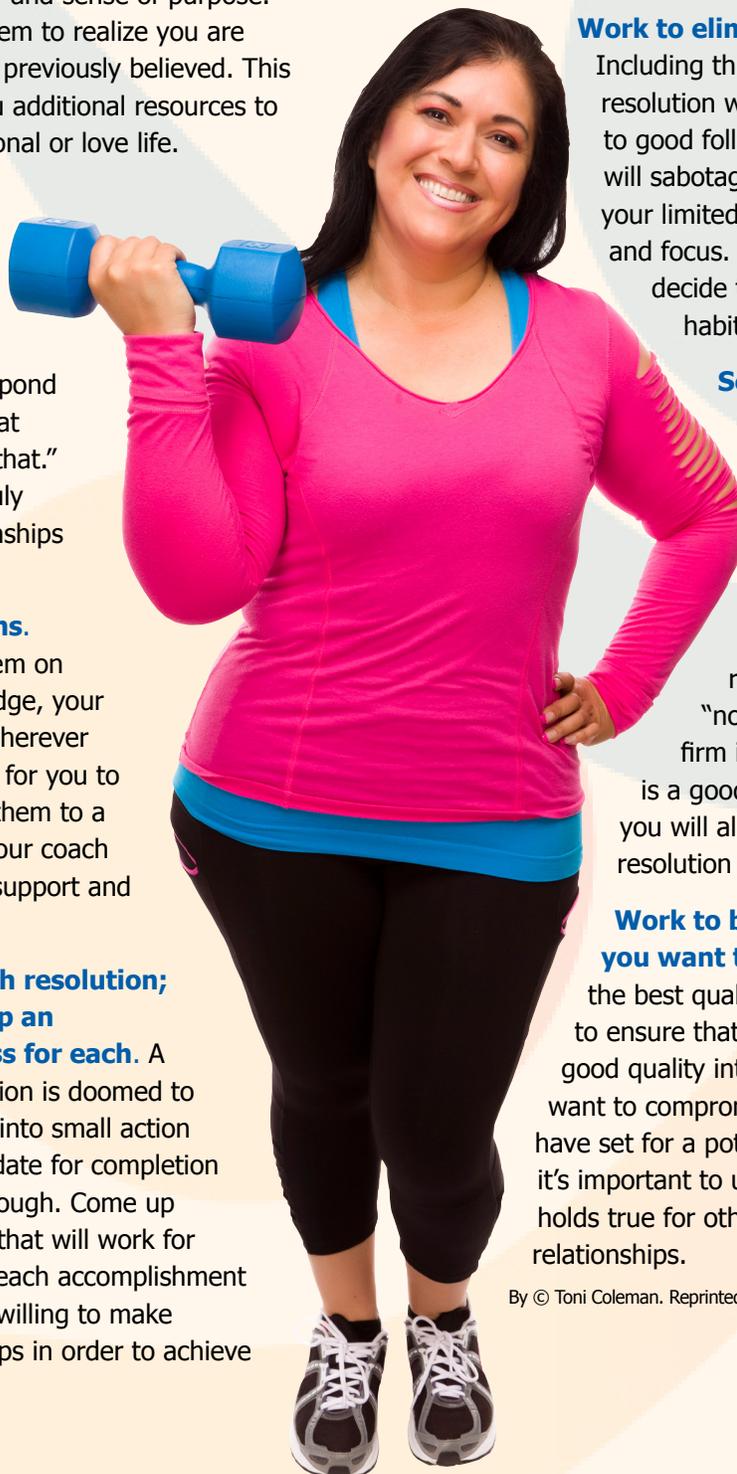
**Take care of yourself; eat well, exercise regularly and learn to control and eliminate unhealthy stress.** I know this is an obvious one, so why is it often ignored or overlooked when we are attempting to make important life changes? How many times have you said, "I don't have the time" to eat right, exercise, sleep, etc.? Not caring for yourself will guarantee failure. So, why not make this your first and most important resolution for the new year?

**Work to eliminate bad habits.** Including this as a New Year's resolution would put you on the road to good follow-through. Bad habits will sabotage your efforts and use up your limited resources of time, energy and focus. For each bad habit you decide to eliminate, have a good habit in mind to replace it with.

**Set appropriate and healthy limits in all areas of your life.** Knowing your limits and enforcing them with yourself and others is a prerequisite to a healthy life and relationships. Learn to say "no" and "enough" and be firm in your resolve that this is a good thing to do. Otherwise, you will also be undermining your resolution to take care of yourself.

**Work to be the kind of person you want to be with.** Bringing out the best qualities in yourself will help to ensure that you attract people of good quality into your life. You wouldn't want to compromise on the standards you have set for a potential mate. Therefore, it's important to understand that this also holds true for other people in search of relationships.

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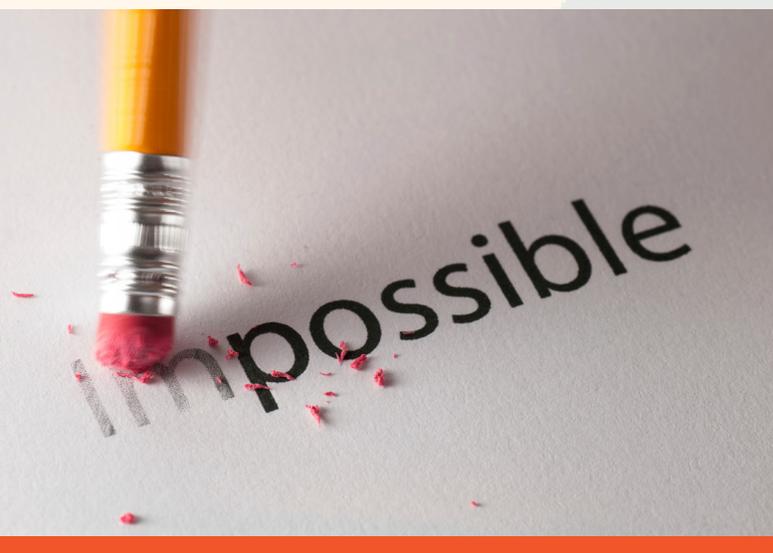
## Setting Realistic Goals

Have you lost motivation? Or maybe you struggle to even get motivated in the first place? Many people have difficulty with motivation at some time during their lives. Here are some of the techniques you can use to stimulate your enthusiasm for taking action – or to become productive again if you’ve lost energy or focus.

Before we begin, however, one thing to consider is that sometimes feeling unmotivated is due to boredom with the task, topic, job or course of study. It also may be helpful to think of lack of motivation as a kind of sophisticated procrastination problem.

### Motivation, goal setting and success

Motivation is the combination of desire, values and beliefs that moves you to take action. These three motivating factors, and/or the lack of them, are at the



root of why people behave the way we do; because we control our values, beliefs and desires, we can influence our motivations. This means that if we consider something important and assign value to it, we are more likely to do the work it takes to attain the goal.

To understand what motivates you, you will need to understand what is important to you. If you have never thought about this question, do it now. Consider issues such as family, relationships, learning/school, grades, work, money, aspirations, achievement, status, travel, social causes, etc. Our goals and desires grow from our values and beliefs. Once you have made your personal list, begin to think about how the items relate to one another. Are some issues more important to you than

others? Are some more important in the short-term while others are more important in the long-term? Are they linked in some critical way? These issues and relationships are always alive inside us. By becoming consciously aware of them, you can begin to modify, control and understand them.

Of course, the opposite may also be true. In exploring where you feel motivated, you may also learn some surprising things about yourself! That is, if you are not motivated by something that you always thought you should want, maybe it is not actually as important to you as you think it should be.

One of the keys to success is having a realistic view of your strengths and weaknesses. Do an informal assessment of your abilities. Reflect on what you have learned about yourself. An accurate and honest assessment of your abilities is essential. It prevents you from underestimating or overestimating your skills and directs you toward attainable and appropriate goals.

Knowing what you value and desire, along with assessing your strengths and weaknesses, makes it possible to establish personal goals. Most people already have a mix of short-term and long-term goals of some type in mind for themselves. Students often aim toward a particular test, project, class, grade point, degree, graduate program, professional school or career. These goals are complemented by others, such as living a healthy lifestyle, maintaining personal integrity, volunteering, working, nurturing relationships or growing as a person. It is not unusual for short-term goals to support long-term goals. For example, a student’s long-term goal to teach elementary school might be supported by a series of short-term goals related to class attendance, study habits, project preparation, test performance and commitment to outside activities.

### Clarity lets you see far and go far

All goals, whether short-term or long-term, should support these common attributes.

- **Make sure your goals are clear.** The problem with many goals is that they are vague. “I must study tonight” is actually a nebulous goal. What specific tasks are you going to perform to “study?” It may be better to set a measurable goal, such as, “At 7 p.m., I’ll read Chapter 6.”

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- **Focus on short-term goals.** There is no rule that says you must know exactly where you are going before you set off on your journey: You can make decisions about where to stop, where to eat and where to stay as you go along. In other words, you don't necessarily need to look further ahead than the next week or the end of the month. You can achieve a lot by concentrating on what is happening NOW and what specific tasks you need to do each day. The more you do, the more you'll be capable of doing.
- **Set a time frame.** Listing tasks to be done each day and then crossing the completed ones off your list is an effective motivator. Once you can see that today wasn't wasted – you did complete some or all of your tasks – you can start having more confidence.
- **Build in rewards.** When you're setting deadlines for yourself, make sure you include a pleasant consequence for completing the tasks. Too often, our goals and deadlines are emphasized with "or else," rather than with a positive result.
- **Look for successes.** Focus on what you have done, not what you've neglected. Perhaps you have started something but couldn't finish it. Be pleased you have something done, pick up the pieces and move forward from there.
- **Make sure your goals are realistic.** Your goals should be based on your abilities and circumstances. Don't establish constraints that make the realistic, unrealistic.
- **Remain flexible.** Anticipate bumps in the road and expect to work around them. If you are willing to redefine your goals to account for changed circumstances, you will remain motivated and on the path to success.
- **Break tasks into small quantities.** Sometimes we try to force ourselves to do too much – like trying to swallow all the hotdog at once so that we can eat our ice cream. A beginning author who writes just one page a day would finish a 365-page book by the end of the year.
- **Remember your long-term goals for motivation.** There may be a time when you lose motivation because it's the same old task, day in and day out and you're bored to tears with it. Sometimes just remembering your long-term goals

is enough to remind you why the short-term tasks matter ... and other times, the boredom may be a clue that you no longer want the same things.

In order to get motivated and stay motivated:

- Identify your values, beliefs and desires;
- Recognize your strengths and weaknesses and use this information to establish clear and realistic goals;
- Understand the role of personal circumstance;
- Realize that success is the merger of all three factors.

When your goals are realistic and match your desires, you will be motivated. When you are motivated and work hard toward your goals, you will succeed. When you succeed, your motivation will grow, you will set new goals and you will continue to achieve.

Know yourself, know your circumstances, set realistic goals and start to succeed.

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