

NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS DON'T WORK



By: *Ryanne Mallow, MSW, APSW*



Every year is the same song and dance. Coaches, teachers, talk show hosts, and lifestyle gurus call for life-changing New Year's resolutions.

Not me.

Let's face it - resolutions just don't work. In fact, some resolutions don't even work for more than several weeks. Objectively, resolutions seem like a great plan. Setting long term goals, making steps to reach the goal, changing your life... that all sounds great. So why don't they work?

1. They are too broad or unrealistic.

"Lose weight" or "Be more positive" or "Spend more time with my kids" are way too broad. We have no idea what we want the outcome to look like. Expecting yourself to work out every day, hold a fulltime job, balance your kid's schedules, and cook a healthy meal every night is not realistic. Contrary to popular opinion, it's not hard to change habits if you do

so based on reality. We bite off big chunks that aren't realistic. Essentially we go from doing nothing to saying we will do everything.

Resolution hack: Start small and specific. Try a SMART goal outline - visit <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm>.

2. The timing's all wrong.

The Thanksgiving/Christmas holiday is focused on being grateful for what you have and enjoying the gifts of family and friendship. Resolutions begin right away on January 1st - just days past the holiday season. Setting resolutions tends to make us look ahead to a "better future" which takes away the gratitude of right now. Resolutions sometimes make us think that somehow your present self is a lesser version of yourself. This seems opposite of appreciating all the positivity that happens during the holidays.

Resolution Hack: Set a gratitude goal on January 1st. Try to focus on the amazing things that happened in 2019 and the incredible

people in your life. Send them thank yous or messages of gratitude. Leave encouraging gifts on your coworkers desks.

3. Resolutions are all about what you think you should do, not about what you actually want.

Stop smoking? Start exercising? Eat healthily? These goals sound great on the surface, but where did you get the idea from? Perhaps you saw something on the news or Facebook that influences your choice to set a resolution. When you're trying to reach a goal that doesn't meet your inner needs and dreams, you might give up.

Resolution Hack: Set a goal that best fits what you actually want. Try reflecting on what could bring you the most joy in 2020. Do you want to exercise more because you genuinely enjoy exercise? That sounds like an excellent plan! You're much more likely to stick to a goal that gives you deeper joy.