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Resolutions That Stick

Marin Rose

Happy New Year, dear readers! What are your hopes for 2015? 'Tis the time for resolutions and I'm here to help you realize yours this year.

There is a faction of people who reject the concept of the New Year's resolution – and for good reason. We all know that gyms stock up on new members in January but that the crowds dissipate by June. Most resolutions simply fizzle out. And why participate in a tradition so wrought with failure it's practically a cliché?

There are several inherent flaws in the “resolution” tradition. For one, the arbitrary timing. With a change in calendar, we presume to think that we can change ourselves. But whether you call them resolutions or goals, and whether you made them on the first of the year or on a more random date, we all have things we'd like to accomplish. Here's how to avoid the common pitfalls.

Choose the right goal.

There's a tendency in January to take on a lot more than is reasonable. Chances are, you're not going to lose weight, get organized, write a novel and quit smoking all at once. Not without also losing your job, alienating your spouse and perhaps tearing out your hair, anyway.

The first step in effective goal setting is to identify your top goal or goals, meaning the goals that are most important, most urgent or most attainable. If health is your first priority, then choose one behavior on which to focus. And take into consideration your own history and personality. Is it necessary to run a marathon this year or is it enough to go running twice a week? Are you even the marathon type? Starting a new year is automatic but becoming a “new you” is a choice and a process. Choose wisely and remember who you are and what's important to you.

Start small.

With the exception of some “all or nothing” types, it's best to start with baby steps and gradually increase your efforts to achieve a new goal. Let's stick with our health example. Rather than committing to changing all your habits at once, ask yourself: what is the smallest possible change I could possibly make to start? Set yourself up for success by making the smallest possible commitment. Rather than cutting out all soda, perhaps replace one soda with one glass of water each week. After a month, replace a second. Gradual change means building new habits slowly, thoughtfully and with purpose. Gradual change is more lasting than a sudden shock to the system.

Anticipate obstacles.

It's easy to be gung-ho on January 4, envisioning the great results of the work we've taken on for a whole four days. To stand the test of time, though, it's crucial to anticipate the obstacles to our success – and plan how to overcome them.

Fresh off the holidays and surrounded by people dutifully pursuing their brand new resolutions, it may not be too challenging to stick to the healthy eating plan you've designed. What happens in a few months, when your honeymoon phase with 2015 is over and your friends have fallen off the wagon? How will you handle Valentine's Day and its proffering of candies and chocolates? What will you tell coworkers pushing birthday cake? What will you order when you go out for dinner?

Temptation is the downfall of many a resolution. What are your temptations? The more accurately you can anticipate them, the better you can avoid or arm yourself against them. Ensure that when the times get tough, you get tougher.



I argue that personal growth is the most important, most rewarding pursuit in life. But it requires self-knowledge and a strategy for incremental change. As with anything, ongoing reflection and planning are critical for success in any endeavor worth making. Since January is GO (Get Organized) Month (learn more about GO Month at napo.net), I'll put forth that getting organized in 2015 is a most worthy goal. Getting organized means committing to honesty with oneself, intentional living and reaping the deep rewards of both, which can spill into all aspects of life.

Whatever your hopes – and plans – for 2015, may they be realized.

Questions for Marin? Inquire at info@libraorganizing.com for a response in next month's column.



Marin Rose owns *Libra Organizing*, an Augusta-based organizing, home staging and move assistance business. Marin serves clients throughout the CSRA, as well as in her hometown of Washington, D.C., New York and beyond. For more information, including notices of free seminars and community events, or to hire Marin to speak at your event or organization, visit libraorganizing.com.