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Here's What You Need to Set and Achieve Your New Goals

by MICHELLE VARTAN  | UPDATED 12/22/18





Do we set resolutions because we want to make a change, or do we just love a good challenge? Or is it because it might mean something if we didn't? One thing we know for sure, if we don't hit our goals in due time, we are often left feeling unaccomplished or worse, like a failure. So why do it? And are resolutions still relevant?

According to life and career coach [Kelsey Murphy](#), they definitely are. "Because you can, in fact, do hard things," she says. When we set a goal and then venture out on the journey to achieve it, we understand new limits as humans—new elements of happiness, innovation or love make us feel more fulfilled and grateful than ever. So a resolution, with the right intention, can be just the thing that moves us forward as a society.

New Year's, in its traditional form, celebrates the beginning of the Christian calendar year, but over the decades it has evolved into a commercialized "new year, new you" soundbite playing on the philosophy of a fresh start sealed with the looming promise of the perfect kiss. But the holiday is really about reflecting on the year past and intending for good things in the year ahead.



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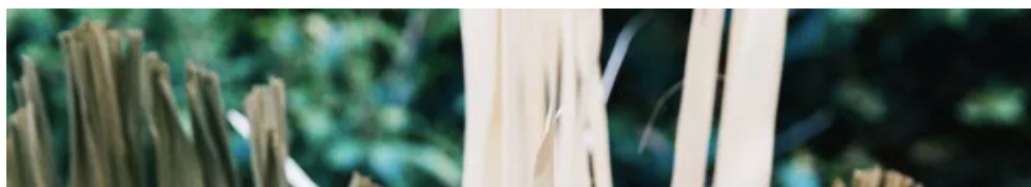
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As you set your 2019 resolutions, be a little kinder to yourself. Instead of defaulting to losing 10 lbs by summer, try and take the time to be thoughtful about the reason. Why are you setting this resolution, how will it help you grow as a person, and why do you want this change now? Once you've established the meaning behind your resolution, then you allow the internal motivation and strategy of achieving it to fall into place. Here are a few words of advice and strategies from the experts to get you started.

How to Set Your Resolution





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Before setting your resolution(s), first celebrate some achievements from the past year, even in the smallest forms such as buying an art piece you loved or a being there for a friend in need. This will help you acknowledge how wonderful you are already.

"Often we focus so much on the areas we want to go, that we forget to celebrate the growth," says Murphy. "But when we remember to celebrate all of the things we have accomplished, big and small, we start building excitement, momentum, and belief in our ability to change, to become someone we've never been, or do something we've never done." Oftentimes we forget this step, she says, and then wonder why we can't find our motivation when we've simply lost faith in ourselves.

Next get into a quiet and focused state of mind with a pen and paper and picture yourself on the eve of New Year's of the *next* year. What is different about your life? Maybe the interior of your home is painted a new color or perhaps your celebrating with a new person in your life—a friend, lover, or new boss. Notice what's changed—often it's in the details where you will find direction. Write down these

loss. Notice what's changed—often it's in the details where you will find direction. Write down these new changes, translate them into outcomes, and then break them down from there. Set yourself up for success by breaking them down into small attainable goals.

Psychotherapist [John Tsilimparis, MFT](#), recommends to often call on this affirmation: "There's no such thing as failure, only varying degrees of success."

How to Achieve Your Resolution



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"I always advise people that big-ticket goals can sometimes be unrealistic and terribly disappointing," says Tsilimparis. "You don't want to set yourself up for failure. Failure causes stress and depression." Life is a game of inches, he says, so set small, easily measurable goals.

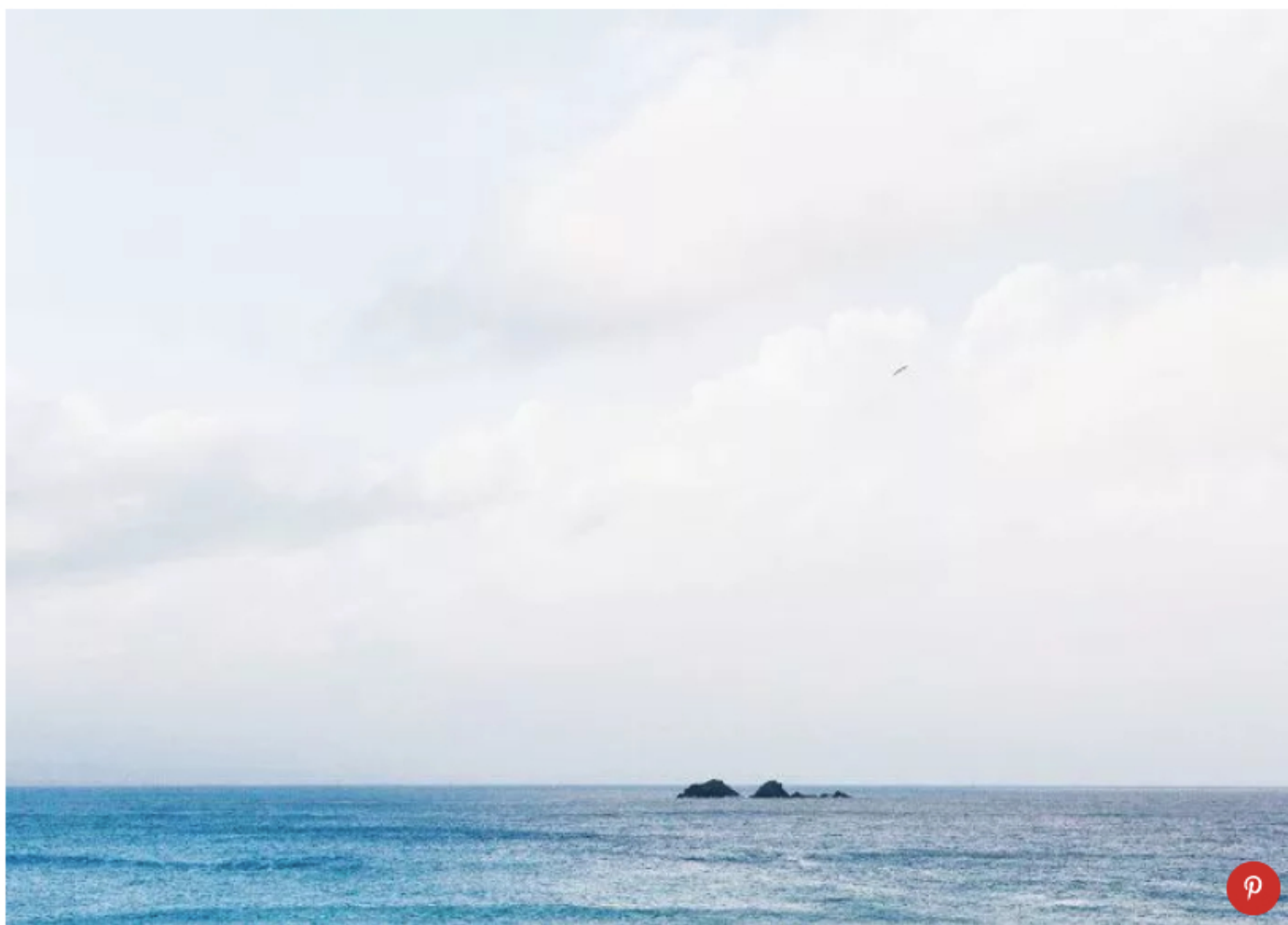
Professor of psychology [Kelly Campbell](#) agrees. "It's okay to have long-term and/or abstract goals, but you'll want to identify what you can work on in the year ahead to move you closer to achieving loftier goals."

Do this by making sure your goals have concrete and measurable outcomes to track your progress. For example, if you want to paint your house, set the date for researching paint companies, then a date for gathering quotes, and so on until you have the painters knocking at your door. Think of each goal as a

baby step, taking note of each progress you make, says Campbell. “Don’t set yourself up for failure by making those steps too difficult.”

Also, keep in mind the past goals that you never did achieve, she says. Why did you get held up in the process? Identify what happened and then modify. “If you want to keep that same goal, ask yourself *What will be different this time around?*”

7 Most Common Resolutions and How to Achieve Them



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Our natural human curiosities keep us yearning to evolve, learn, and grow, so often resolutions revolve around life changes. And there are commonalities in goals that most people can relate to making for some very common resolutions connecting all of us. Whether you’re feeling unfulfilled at work, or the piano studio on your street corner keeps nagging you to come in, below are the most common resolutions and tips for how to set and achieve them.

Start a New Job

How to set: “Start looking for people who are living lives you want, not just have jobs you want and ask them to coffee,” says Murphy. “Most of the time it’s less about the job we want and more about the life

we want.”

Also, because a new job is broad in meaning, Tsilimparis suggests researching first. Think about the life and job you want and throw yourself into an investigation.

How to achieve: Start a new routine where each day, even if only for 15 minutes, you find one person on LinkedIn to message and simply say "I love what you do, and the way you do it, can I take you to a 20-minute coffee to simply connect?" You can even make it a part of your morning routine.

“Timelines are helpful too, for example, saying, by January 1 or 15 or by February 1, I'm going to target three or four new jobs that I'm interested in and submit a résumé,” Tsilimparis says. “Again small goals first to realize a larger goal later.”





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Start a New Hobby or Learn a New Skill

How to set: First, identify your new hobby by following your curiosities. “The small things that have always intrigued you, the hobbies you hear people talk about at the office who you envy and wish you did, the topics you can't stop talking about after one too many glasses of wine,” says Murphy. “Those are the small callings of your heart—of who you are—that you need to stop ignoring and start following.”

How to achieve: Set aside 15 minutes every day to create your new habit, advises Murphy. “See what it feels like to play piano for seven days straight or learn a new Italian word every morning. Consistency in small increments is the key to becoming the person you want to be.” Murphy offers a free [30-Day Passion Planner](#) that will show you how to do this.

Meet a New Love

How to set: One of the key qualities to look for in a partner (or friend) is that they bring out the best in you. “Decide that one of the most important characteristics of a partner is that they inspire you,” Murphy says. “Make a promise to start making time to be around more inspiring people.”

It's important to handle this resolution delicately, Campbell warns. Even though falling in love is a wonderful goal, if you put too much pressure on it, you could make the mistake of forcing a relationship with someone who is not your best match. Instead, think of your resolution this way: “I'd recommend making this goal both about yourself as well as another person,” she says. “So if by the end of the year, you haven't met a new love, at least you will have achieved the goal by making sure you cultivated or strengthened love toward yourself.”

Besides, Campbell says, the key to finding your mate is to first fall in love with yourself. “When you love and respect yourself, you show an example to others regarding how you expect to be treated and that you don't accept poor treatment,” she says. “Therefore, if your goal is to fall in love, my advice is to work on yourself first and the rest will fall into place.”





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How to achieve: Love happens by chance, but you do have to allow that chance to unfold. So block off one night on your calendar each week to do something fun with people who move you, advises Murphy. “You know those guys who hike on the weekend that inspire you? Sign up for the meetup,” she says.

In an effort to building a loving relationship with yourself, Campbell advises self-care such as exercising or shopping at farmers markets or a calendar full of activities that make you enjoy life. And besides, “The best relationships are ones in which partners share a lot of similarities, so if you are engaging in hobbies and getting out with friends, you are likely to meet someone who shares at least some of your interests,” she says. She suggests a “friends-first” approach that focuses on building relationships with good people and allowing romance to blossom organically. “If it’s not meant to be romantic, at least you will have gained a friend.”



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Make New Friends

How to set: Speaking of friendship, first have the goal of making just one valuable new friend as one quality friend is enough to impact well being and happiness, says Campbell. “In fact, as we get older, we tend to eliminate low-quality friends and just keep the good ones.”

Factors to look for in a good friend include those who offer to help during times of need, keep confidences, stand up for you, provide emotional support, celebrate your success, and strive to make you happy.

How to achieve: Similar to meeting a romantic partner, get involved in hobbies you enjoy or try new things. Campbell advises picking up the book [*How to Win Friends and Influence People*](#), a long-time best seller supported by research.

Basic practices in attracting friends include becoming genuinely interested in other people, remembering their name (because people love to hear their own name), encouraging people to talk about themselves, listening and talking about their interests. Try to make the other person feel important.





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Practice More Self-Care

How to set: Self-care can mean many things to many different people such as spending time in nature, taking a class or simply taking a nap. But whatever you do for self-care, it has to be something that will make you feel *good*. If you notice painting brings out the tense side of you or if you just can't wait for your long hike to be over with, try something else that makes you feel at ease. Picture yourself when you were 10 years old, what would he/she want to do?

How to achieve: "Again smaller increments prevents you from failing and feeling defeated," says Tsilimparis. Start by finding one day a week to practice self-care. Once you adapt your new schedule you may be able to make it two days a week. Also, think of a way to treat yourself that doesn't involve you

leaving the house. If you have kids, soak in a bubble bath as soon as they go to bed.



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Be More Present

How to set: Think of two or three times during the day when you want to be more present—for example, dinner with your family or your break at work. Identify these times and target them as a time to practice. You can also think of an upcoming event, such as a birthday party or shopping with a friend.

How to achieve: First “a great way to be more present in your life is to begin your day with intention and focus,” Tsilimparis advises. Do this by taking five minutes of calm and quiet before reaching for

your phone. Then, let's say you want to be present during dinner, turn off your phone and TV and stop working; focus on the food, says Tsilimparis. "Focus on the aroma of your meal, the taste, the texture in your mouth. Focus on all of the people that it took to bring this food to your table. This will slow your mind down and help you be more present."

Also, the key element to being present is to let go of the seductive desire for control, he says. "When we are in 'controlling thinking,' we don't like uncertainty, we want guarantees, and we want to know the outcome of everything." But there are no guarantees to anything. So if you've prepared a beautiful meal for your friends or family to connect over and one person is rudely on their phone, *let it go* and get back to being present.

And remember to avoid futuristic thinking, which is usually fear-based, or past thinking, which is typically regret-based. "Staying in the here and now is the only thing that's real. It's the only thing that's not an illusion. Future and past thinking are merely the play of thought," he says.





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Lose Weight

How to set: If you have an abstract or long-term goal such as getting in shape, you'll want to identify concrete steps that move you toward accomplishing that goal, advises Campbell. "Think in terms of baby steps and be grateful for any progress you make. Some progress is better than nothing, so don't be hard on yourself!"

How to achieve: For example, go to the gym two times per week for the first six months of the year and then go three times per week for the last six months of the year. Or if you want to cut back on calorie intake, subtract unnecessary calories little by little. For example, if you have four sodas a week, take that down to three then two. Or if you have three deserts a week, take that down to two, then one. Try substituting your wine or dessert with a sweet tea.

There have been mixed reviews about using a scale as it can feel torturous at times, derailing your progress. But it has been shown that weighing yourself once a week, at the same time on the same scale, is effective in weight loss. But use the scale as a compass and nothing more. Something that tells you when you're headed in the right direction, and when you need to modify.

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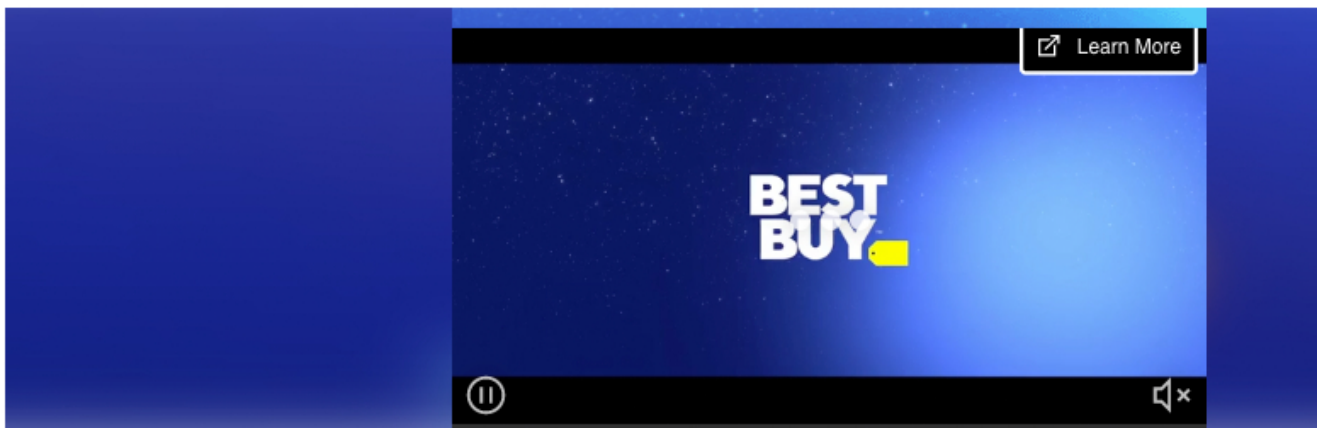
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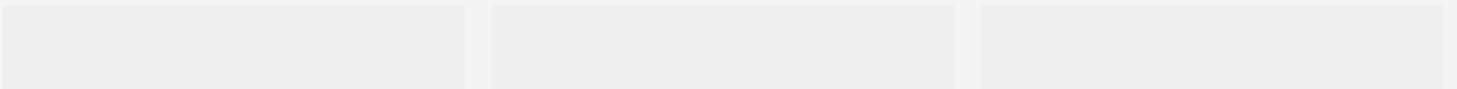
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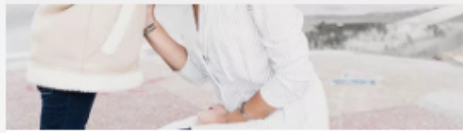
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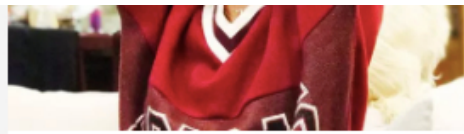
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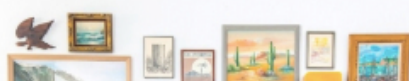
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