

How to be strategic with your NYRs



More than 90% of us are likely to give up on our New Year's Resolutions (NYRs), says **Sarah Bradbury** of Dentists' Provident, who provides tips on how not to fail.

Did you know around 40% of resolutions are related to losing weight or getting fit and healthy?

While resolutions to live a healthier lifestyle and give up negative habits are great in the long term, certain resolutions and the way we go about trying to keep them can be very stressful, not just for us but for those around us!

Top five NYRs for health and fitness, according to a YouGov survey are:¹

1. Eating better: a balanced diet of wholegrain carbohydrates, unsaturated fats,

protein and plenty of fruit and vegetables, as well as cutting down on processed food and alcohol, could not only make you feel better but also help you to lose weight. There are simple effective food swaps you can do to keep you feeling fuller for longer. And if you notice the benefits of these changes, this can easily become a new lifestyle, allowing for the odd slip-up.

2. Exercising more: exercise is known to give you physiological, physical and psychological benefits and if you move it outdoors these are enhanced. Not only will you be enjoying any fleeting vitamin D

from the sun, but you'll also benefit from the mental stimulation an ever-changing scenery provides that an indoors gym or fitness class can't match. Research has shown that being part of nature can burn up to 30% more calories too.

3. Looking after yourself: getting more sleep can make a huge difference to how you feel and be easy to achieve if you ensure you make the extra time for it, as well as making your bedroom more conducive to sleeping. Helpful tips include reading a book, having a hot relaxing bath or meditating before bedtime and not looking at a screen



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before settling down to rest. All of these can help you slip-off to sleep and have the recommended 7-9 hours a night.²

4. Finding a new hobby: choosing a new hobby that provides you with mental or physical stimulation can be an easy and satisfying resolution to make. Whether it's joining a sports or leisure club to combine both fitness and social elements, an evening class or a new pastime at home, it can help to challenge you both mentally and physically.

5. Focusing on your appearance: we all have days where we look in the mirror and wish something looked different, so it's important to find the time to look after yourself even with a busy life of family and work commitments. Whether it's a regular beauty treatment, a shopping spree or a spa day, it won't take much to feel better about

yourself. So maybe it's time to schedule a little 'me' time as something to look forward to?

How to achieve your NYRs

To combat the stress of trying to stick to your resolutions, here are a few tips to help you focus on them until at least this time next year, and maybe even for a lifetime...³

1. Break up your resolutions

Richard Wiseman, professor in Public Understanding of Psychology at Hertfordshire University, says you can boost your will power by completely focusing on **one new** resolution and breaking that down into smaller goals, rather than trying to achieve multiple resolutions. Take the time to plan your approach in advance and make sure you reward yourself when you reach key milestones.^{3,4}

2. Use practical tools, expert advice and useful apps

There are a multitude of online health and fitness advice and tools; NHS LiveWell has many areas of guidance and there are also a huge variety of apps to help you log and monitor your intake of food and drink and output of exercise. There are sports trackers that help you set goals and record your exercise and calories burnt, and health and diet monitoring devices that provide an easy way to record what you eat and drink. So don't go it alone, find one that works for you.⁵

3. Get support to stay motivated

The Mental Health Foundation suggests we can be more successful by having a support network of friends and family. Your network can help you to stay focused, and ensure you don't get stressed and obsess over small failures, but start afresh every day and especially after each small setback. Also, if you can make your resolution become part of your everyday routine, then after several weeks it is more likely to become a lasting habit.³

4. Set realistic goals

Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, Professor of Business Psychology at UCL, says we fail in so many of our resolutions because we set goals that are not realistic. So it is very important to set specific, realistic and achievable goals, which do not try to change our innate personalities and character traits.

Breaking habits

As much as 40% of our daily behaviour is habitual. Breaking habits may seem hard

but the good news is that your new changes could be part of your life more quickly than you think; habits can be made or broken in as little as 21 days. And don't forget that the most important thing is that these are positive changes for your life, health and wellbeing so it's important they don't make you physically or mentally ill while trying to achieve them.

At Dentists' Provident, we are here to help our members when times get tough because they are off from work ill or injured. So here is a bit about us to finish...we were started by dentists over a hundred years ago as a membership organisation to protect them from the financial consequences of illness or injury. We have been part of the profession ever since, working together to support all dental professionals with our highly flexible income protection plans which are designed to be as individual as you are. We are still owned and run by our members who are at the heart of everything we do.

We are here when members need us most... and good luck with your resolutions...

References

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Sarah Bradbury has been head of marketing and communications for Dentists' Provident since 2013. She has previously worked for the British Dental Association as the student/young dentist manager, Dental Protection Limited as marketing operations manager and for Simplyhealth Professionals (Denplan) as strategic partnerships and brand manager.

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