

## New Year's Resolutions

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This is obviously delayed and you may have already achieved or forsaken your resolution(s), but in case you can use it, here is my resolution advice offering. Experts on such resolutions say that no more than 10% of those who make resolutions succeed in reaching their goals, especially if the resolution is not small or internally motivated.

In watching patients over the last almost fifty years, I've noticed that those with goals defined by absolutes, such as X number of pounds lost and exercising absolutely every day, reach their goals far less often than do those who choose 'more' or 'less' of something, like walking or eating vegetables more often and sitting fewer hours at the computer or eating candy less often. More than zero and less than excess is far more achievable than always or never. Resolutions don't need to be the common ones about food, weight and job success. We can address behavioral and emotional goals similarly with 'more of' and 'less'. For example, "I'll swear less at Y and say thank you 'more to A' or I'll try to (rather than always) count slowly to 10 before blowing up and will say please more often." Years ago, I succeeded in writing more thank you notes and paying my credit card bill late less often. I did neither 100% of the time but was happy to have appreciated hosts more visibly and paid fewer late fees.

As far as absolute dietary rules go, absolutes can be dangerous. For example, eating zero fat will cause essential fatty acid deficiency and an elderly person who eliminates salt/sodium from their diet runs the risk of falling from hypotension, because SOME sodium is necessary for health and we have different daily losses and physiologic requirements depending on our exercise and hormonal balance.

Since always and never are difficult, in evaluating our success we can be more kind to ourselves about our resolution outcomes if we are critical of ourselves less often||