

Time to hit the reset button

At the start of every new year, about half the nation's population has made one or more resolutions. In 2018, the three most common goals were to eat healthier, get more exercise and save more money. Resolutions are all about change and self-improvement, either stopping bad habits or trying to develop good ones. A fresh new year offers a reset button, time to turn over a fresh page.

Change is not easy. Even with the best of intentions, by mid-year, fewer than half of the people who made resolutions are sticking with them. There are many things that can impede even the best of intentions. Pogo comic strip creator Walt Kelly said, "We have met the enemy and he is us." When it comes to making resolutions, we are our best saboteur. In fact, we often unwittingly set ourselves up to fail.

Our EAP counselors study the dynamics of change and offer insight into how to make resolutions that will stick:

Start with research. Begin by thinking about your past year. What was good about it? What changes might have made your year more meaningful or productive? Focus on things that are within your control. Ask friends and family what successful resolutions they've made.

Make meaningful goals. Be honest with yourself about what you'd really like to change or accomplish. Goals should mean something to you. Usually, you need to make changes for yourself, not for someone else.

Be realistic. Don't overdo it. People make too many goals. Make a broad list of potential goals and narrow it down to one or two goals you'd most like to make.

Go in with a plan. Research your resolutions in advance to learn the time, money and effort you need to be successful. Make a concrete plan.



Share your goal and ask for support. Talk about your resolutions with supportive friends or family. Consider joining a related support group.

Expect obstacles. Life has curves and bumps, expect them. Keep focused on your goal even if you have setbacks. It can take months to establish a new habit or routine so keep trying.

Be positive. A resolution shouldn't be something you dread, it should be something that will improve your life. Focus on the positives that the change will make in your life, not the hard steps you need to take to get there.

Be creative. Here are a few ideas.

- Do one thing every day: a random act of kindness, learning a new word or making a daily journal entry.
- Challenge yourself: take a trip to a place you've never been, volunteer for a charitable cause or find other ways to step out of your comfort zone and routine.
- Learn something new: take a class, learn a language or take up a fun new hobby.

Your EAP can help

Your EAP has coaches, counselors, wellness tools and a wide roster of courses that can help you improve your new year. Login to the self-help center to get ideas. You can also call the EAP to discuss your specific challenges and obtain on-going emotional support.