

You Say You Want a Resolution...

...but the real question is, can you keep it? These five expert tips will give you a fighting chance.



1. Get Real...and Ready

“Resolutions have to be realistic,” says quititnow.com’s **Steven Rosenberg, Ph.D., an Elkins Park, PA-based behavior therapist** who helps people stop smoking, lose weight, and perform better in sports. You can’t drop 50 pounds overnight, but shedding a pound a week for a year is reasonable. You must also be mentally prepared. “Ask yourself, ‘Do I really want to stop smoking/lose weight/get out of this relationship? Am I ready to make this leap?’ ” If so, know that it’s easier to *start* a positive behavior than *stop* a negative one. “I give everybody trying to lose weight a pedometer and have them aim for 5,000 steps a day. They start thinking, ‘I might as well eat better,’ and lose weight like you’d never believe!”

2. Be Focused and Specific

Trying to keep 10 resolutions—or a single, complicated one (as women often do)—will spread you too thin. Do one thing and do it well, says Rosenberg, and outline that goal firmly enough that you’ll know when you’ve reached it. “To do better at work, you need details. You need to define what your job really entails.” If you’re an attorney, for example, lay out what it takes to satisfy clients and rack up billable hours on your way to making partner. Then follow through.

3. Take Your Time

Long-term goals can only be reached bit by bit. “You can’t just go out one day and run a marathon,” observes Rosenberg. “Your body is not ready to accept it.” So if you’re starting an exercise program, you’re better off getting on the treadmill for 15 minutes a day, every other day, and working up to 30 minutes or more every day, than trying to sprint yourself into Meb Keflezighi shape in a single afternoon. Handy slogan: *Baby steps lead to babes and sex.*

4. Picture Your Success

From sports to weight loss, nothing beats visualization, says Rosenberg, who’s worked with everyone from collegiate cross-country runners to Philadelphia Flyers. “When I get a pro athlete to visualize themselves performing well, and feel it, they do. And being able to imagine how it feels to be thinner will make that come to fruition, too.” Once you truly *see* the benefits of a fitter physique, it’s much easier to turn down that empty-calorie-packed bag of chips or piece of cake.

5. Bounce Back from a Back Slide

As noble as resolutions are, Rosenberg finds that 65 to 70 percent of them don’t survive January. But even if you slip a little on your way toward a goal—miss a workout, slack at work, sneak a smoke—it’s critical to realize that all is not lost. As Rosenberg says: “Rather than feeding into negativity, think positively. ‘OK, I had a bad day. I’m going to move forward and correct what I’ve done. I just have to pull myself up, dust myself off, and do better tomorrow.’ ” Rack up more good days than bad, and we’re pretty sure 2010 will be a rousing success.