



Keeping Resolutions

By Mike Stewart, CSP

New Year's Resolutions don't work for most people according to all the research I've seen, so don't feel bad if you are struggling with yours. Based on the evidence available there is better than an 80% chance that you will not keep this year's resolutions, if you even made any.

Resolutions are decisions that are often made in an emotional vacuum and, as such, are not connected to a meaningful goal. Isolated actions such as "eat less and exercise more" are often just things to do. They lack the moral persuasion of passion to achieve a certain deeply desired emotional goal.

For example,

What I resolve is, but...what I really want is...

Eat less and exercise more...Drop 30 pounds, or

Drop 30 pounds...Stay under 180 pounds, or

Stay under 180 pounds...Look great and feel good, or

Look great and feel good...Live the lifestyle I want, which means

The lifestyle I want is to:

- Look 10 years younger, and
- Have the energy to work hard enough to earn \$120,000

***"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams
and live the life you've imagined."***

– Henry David Thoreau

Begin with a Vision of what you are sincerely passionate about achieving. In the example above the person's true motivation is to look 10 years younger and have the energy to work hard enough to earn \$120,000. If this individual commits to this vision, then the diet and exercise activities become means to the desired end and, as such, are meaningful and inspired by passion.

Passion is more important than Goal-Setting in realizing your dreams. There is a popular urban legend that you may have heard about the Yale Class of 1953. Supposedly, only 3% of the class prepared written goals and twenty years later they possessed 97% of the combined wealth accumulated by the class. There is no truth whatsoever to that story. It is nothing more than a fabricated motivational gimmick to encourage people to set goals.

Create your vision as a foundation for your goals. In your mind's eye see a clear picture of the thing you want; or of yourself, perhaps

with your family, or with your friends, in the precise situation you ardently desire, such as:

- Enrolling your children in the school you want them to attend
- Telling your loved one about the promotion you have earned
- Smelling the leather seats in the BMW you crave

"Your heart is free. Have the courage to follow it."

- Braveheart

Continually reinforce your Vision by sharing it with your loved ones and, if it is job-related, with your boss or support team at work. Don't just mention it when you commit to it, then forget about it. Review it often during the year. Mutually critique the activities you are performing to achieve your goal, and the progress you are making.

Another reinforcement idea that will be a surprisingly powerful motivator is to create what Cher Holton calls a Dreamscape:

- Cut out one or more pictures that represent your vision: a picture of the school you want your children to attend, a house like the one you want for your family after your promotion, or that BMW with the leather seats. Keep these where you will see them frequently.
- Create an image. Fabricate a dummy check paying you the bonus that you envision yourself earning this year. Or write a faux letter to yourself from your boss praising your accomplishments - or awarding you the promotion you seek.
- Put your Dreamscape on your computer as a screensaver.

Keep you eyes on the prize and your shoulder to the wheel.

Stay focused on your vision, treat it like a project, and insure that your activities are leading to that ultimate objective. When you do, you may be surprised to find that your resolutions are much easier to maintain than you imagined.

"The starting point of all achievement is desire."

- Napoleon Hill

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