

Motivation: Keeping Your Resolutions Alive

We often jump into the New Year full of good intentions and resolutions. But sometime around February, those intentions seem to flag.

If you find your motivation waning again this year, don't let it. Motivation is essential to achieving goals and to leading a healthy lifestyle. To maintain motivation, figure out what you want, power through the challenges and start being the person you want to be.

Set SMART Goals

Setting goals is key to getting started. Setting SMART goals is key to success. What are SMART goals:

S: Specific. Be precise about what you want to achieve.

M: Measurable. Establish ways to gauge your progress.

A: Attainable. Don't set unreasonable expectations.

R: Realistic. Expect to face setbacks. Everyone does.

T: Time-bound. Set deadlines for achieving each step toward your goals.

Goals provide focus and act as a measuring tool for progress. They enhance productivity, bolster self-esteem and increase commitment so you are more likely to achieve whatever you set out to conquer. The simple fact is that when people have goals to guide them, they are happier and achieve more. Here are some other tips:

- Put your goals in writing. Be specific, use action verbs, have measurable outcomes and specify completion dates.
- Make a list of obstacles by thinking of everything that might stand in your way then decide what you can do about each obstacle. Shield yourself from distractions and temptations that may arise along the way.
- List the benefits of achieving your goal: What exactly do you hope to achieve.
- Identify sub-goals. Be specific, and make sure each step is challenging but attainable.
- Get prepared and organized. It's hard to focus when information is scattered.
- Leave some room for mistakes. Do not expect perfection.

Monitor, Feedback and Reward

Reward yourself for every successful step you take toward achieving your goal. Treat yourself to motivate yourself to continue moving forward.

Enlist others for help if you need it and try to find someone with whom you share a common goal. Also, look for someone who has already achieved the goals you seek to reach and ask them for their insight on how to accomplish them.

Practice Makes Perfect

Do not give up easily. The closer you get to accomplishing your goals, the easier it gets. Self-control functions similar to a muscle becoming stronger with use. If you keep practicing self-control, you will become better at it.