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# TOM TOM ENGLISH



MOST PEOPLE MAKE RESOLUTIONS AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES. DID YOU? AND WILL YOU STICK TO THEM? ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS BEFORE READING THE ARTICLE.

We'd all like to improve our lives, and the New Year seems like an ideal time to take stock, think about goals, and make plans. Some people say that

January is a bad time for resolutions - but what do you think?

Did you make any resolutions this year? What were they?

Write them down on a piece of paper for discussion later.

If you didn't make any resolutions, tell the group why not? Now make a couple of simple resolutions for discussion later on.

## Most Popular US Resolutions

According to USA today

Eat less and exercise more

Drink less

Learn something new

Quit smoking

Better work/life balance

Volunteer for a charity

Save money

## NUMBERS

Percentage of people who are successful in achieving their resolutions

# 8%

People in their 20s who achieve their resolution each year

# 39%

People in their 50s who achieve their resolution each year

# It's not enough to make the resolutions. You have to find a way to keep them.

Adapted from USA Today

Scranton University psychology professor John Norcross is offering ways to follow through on your New Year's resolutions.

Last year, 40% of Americans planned to make resolutions on Jan. 1. Popular ambitions included the usual suspects: losing weight, improving finances, quitting smoking and reducing alcohol use.

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"Resolutions have been uncannily similar and stable over the years," Norcross said.

But, the author of *Changeology: 5 Steps to Realizing your Goals and Resolutions* says resolutions are hard to keep for many Americans. Last year, Norcross predicted 50% would break one, if not all, of their goals by mid-January.

Here are some tips from Norcross to keep your New Year's goals. And remember, it's a marathon, not a sprint!

**1) Make changes to your behavior.** Changing your routine can bring different results. Instead of trying the same thing over and over again, expecting a different outcome, people

need to modify their behaviors.

## **2) Define SMART goals.**

When setting targets, use the SMART acronym: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-specific. Norcross says that individuals must go further than simply saying, "I want to lose weight." "Specifically, what are you going to do so that you can measure and track [your weight] over time, for say, the next three to four months?" he said.

## **3) Track your progress.**

Norcross calls this technique self-monitoring. A calendar, or a calendar app, is a handy tool you can use to track your goals. "It also can show you what the triggers of your behavior are and it can alert you to any early slips," Norcross says.

**4) Reward small achievements.** When you reach a portion of your goal, as an example you lose 10 of those 25 pounds, be kind to yourself. Recognize the accomplishment and perhaps do something nice for yourself. This will help keep you focused and excited about the overall goal.

**5) Make it public.** When individuals announce their goals on social media, to their families or in the

workplace, they are being held accountable by those closest to them. The upside to this, Norcross says, is it can keep you on track. The downside: "It potentially increases embarrassment if they fail," he said. So, it depends on how open you want to be about your resolutions.

## **6) You are human.**

Chances are you may slip up once or twice during this process. It's OK. Norcross says it is important to deal with failures by getting back on track and continuing along your journey. Seventy percent of successful goal-setters said that their first slip actually strengthened their resolutions. Norcross says to adopt the outlook, "I'm human. Let me learn from it, and let me keep going."

## **Discussion Questions**

Why do you think so many people fail to keep their resolutions?

Which of these tips do you think are most useful?

Which are least?

Can you add some tips?

How can you apply these tips to your own resolutions? Make some SMART goals!