

Year-End Resolutions: Let Your Values Be Your Guide



Resolution lists, no matter the time of year, can be recipes for disappointment and self-criticism, especially when they include hard and fast goals, like specific weight loss targets and dramatic personality changes. Most of us like to be connected to a sense of purpose, so what if the steps we choose to take in the new year are designed to reinforce that feeling? What if our values become the focus of our ambitions for the future?

Identify Your Values

Think about what matters to you. Are your values connected to personal beliefs or external judgments? Do you want to lose weight to be skinny because skinny is best according to Instagram? Or do you want to manage your weight as part of healthy role modeling for your family? If the changes you seek are connected to personal values, you are more likely to succeed.

Reach Deep and Set Aside Perfection

Following goals that connect to values is an active, ongoing process which can sometimes be painful. You might be stressed and unhappy at work or miserable in a relationship and, in some cases, these situations are caused by clashes with your values. If your goal is to move on, these are tough calls that may reinforce your personal values, while also bringing emotional weight.

Your goals might meet logistical obstacles. Say you want deeper, closer relationships in your life, but find that the current circumstances make personal connection hard. It may be necessary to compromise by temporarily using video calls to serve this value. Flexibility is key.

Simplify for Success

If you have many competing values, choose your top three to focus on and set goals related to those priorities for the time being. This relieves potential stress and helps you work within manageable boundaries.

Be ready to reframe success. For example, if you have prioritized self-care, look for ways that you have been successful in working towards that value. Maybe you found time to eat outside instead of at your desk, or you found the strength to say no to a task for which you didn't have the emotional bandwidth. Even if you didn't also set aside time for a 30-minute exercise class, you have still moved toward a top personal value.

It's always possible that, even when we are flexible, we encounter barriers to some of the goals we set. Fortunately, as we work toward values, we don't pursue a specific achievement. We can look at obstacles we've met, figure out the support we might need and try again – while also being compassionate with ourselves about making the effort.

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