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How to maintain your fitness New Year's resolutions

Many of us like to set New Year's resolutions, and often vow to start exercising more or become healthier. However, on average, 80% of New Year's resolutions fail by the second week of February and fitness resolutions in particular can be challenging to keep up. So, how can you maintain your fitness goals when the urge to stay in bed rather than jog to the gym on a cold January morning is just so strong?

What type of fitness resolutions do people tend to have and why does this motivation arise at New Year?

Fitness coach [Ryan Hodgson](#) has worked in the fitness industry the last 12 years, and he sees the same thing at the start of every year.

"Every January it's the same thing with many jumping on the whole 'new year, new me' bandwagon. They are often on a quest to find a healthier body shape, [lose weight](#) and have more energy. Perhaps they just want to start exercising for their [overall health](#) and [fitness](#). The new year is often an easier time of year to make these changes, with fewer social occasions and the thought process of 'starting the year fresh' coming to mind to help with motivation," he says.

Hodgson says, although this [New Year motivation](#) is admirable, you might be setting yourself up for failure before you've even started.

"This kind of thinking starts you off on a bad note. No one needs a 'new them'. Often when you set out to find a new you, you lose the current you that works. What you've been doing up to now works for you. It may not have you in the shape you want to be in, but it works right now and it is keeping you alive. You should build on that slowly and steadily, rather than aspiring to create a whole new version of yourself overnight."

Why do people give up their New Year's resolutions?

Research shows that it takes approximately 66 days to [form a new habit](#), so as hard as they are to start, they can be even harder to keep. Hodgson isn't surprised by this.

"It's no wonder people have often given up their [New Year's resolutions](#) by the end of January. A New Year's resolution starts with such hope and promise, which is gone within a few weeks," he says.

"The 'new them' quickly evaporates when they realise that, when they went from not training at all to training daily, they didn't have time to do many other things in their life. Or, if people go from having a few drinks each week to [cutting alcohol out](#) completely, they miss it too much. It isn't sustainable."

People's New year's resolutions often aren't specific enough. For example, '[exercise more](#)' and '[get fit](#)' are very general goals. Therefore, there is little way to monitor your progress and it's unlikely you'll keep up that motivation throughout the year. It's easier to drop out of something if you don't have specific targets. But, when you have goals that aren't so vague and you can actually work towards them, it's harder to walk away.

Also, when starting a new year with big health and fitness goals, it can be disappointing when you don't see the results you hoped for. For example, if you set out to lose a certain amount of weight and begin with high expectations, it can cause you to throw in the towel when changes aren't immediate, causing you to wonder whether it's worth it.

How can you maintain your fitness resolutions?

Hodgson stresses the importance of setting realistic goals that take into account your current lifestyle. When you do that, your New Year resolutions become more about adding value to your life, rather than taking you away from the things you need to do day-to-day. For example, deciding you are going to work out every day if you have three children probably isn't doable. Likewise, if you work late shifts but aim to get up at 6 am for a [morning run](#), it's unlikely to be sustainable.

You also shouldn't be trying to go from zero-100 as soon as January hits. If you have never really exercised, that's OK. It's much more important for you to start off slowly rather than diving in at the deep end. Not only to maintain your New Year resolutions, but because you can cause more damage to your health if you push yourself too hard. A New Year's resolution is a New Year's resolution for a reason – it's about implementing small changes and seeing an improvement over the course of the year, not changing drastically overnight.

Other tips to maintain your fitness resolutions

- Set small targets – for example, you could aim to [run 5k](#) by the end of January or even March, then gradually increase that distance each month.
- Buddy up – exercising with a friend or loved one can make you less likely to give up as quickly. You can motivate each other.
- Reward yourself – resolutions shouldn't be all about constantly pushing yourself or taking things out of your life that you enjoy in the name of fitness.
- Schedule in rest days – you may feel motivated to [head to the gym](#) daily at the start of the year, but it isn't good for your body to be without rest. Not only can pushing yourself too hard lead to failure in your resolutions, but it can lead to burnout or other physical injuries.
- Don't beat yourself up – fitness resolutions are a marathon, not a sprint (sometimes literally). If you decide to stay in bed one morning instead of going to Pilates, there's nothing wrong with that. Being harsh on yourself, especially if you're someone with little history of exercising, won't aid you in the long run. You have to be kind and understanding with yourself. Be your own cheerleader!
- Track your progress – you might do this with a written chart, or a fitness app. Seeing how far you've come already can really spur you on to keep going in those moments when you feel despondent.
- Set goals that are important to you – if you are emotionally connected to your goals, you can be emotionally connected to the outcomes. It can create a greater feeling of pride and achievement if you are genuinely invested in what you're working towards, rather than simply doing what everyone else is doing.

How can you find motivation to exercise on days when you don't want to?

"If you find you're [struggling with motivation](#) to work out, it's important to look at why. Do you actually [enjoy your workouts](#)? If not, try something different. Having [variety in your fitness regime](#) is important for motivation, as well as ensuring your New Year's resolutions are sustainable. If you are bored and exercising feels like a chore rather than an exciting new challenge, it's unlikely you'll stick with it. Also ensure you are [getting enough sleep](#) and nourishing your body with food and water," says Hodgson.

It's also important to remember that even the most motivated individuals have their off days. Everyone struggles with motivation in various aspects of life, even the fittest, healthiest people you know. Don't punish yourself for having a down day – it's normal.

A final reminder ...

"Think of the tortoise and the hare – slow and steady wins the race. Consistency is key rather than diving in head-first, all guns blazing. Don't get impatient with yourself; just trust the process and imagine that feeling of pride burning in you when you reach the end of the year and can look back at all the things you've done that you weren't able to 12 months ago," says Hodgson.

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