

## "This is the year .... "

With the coming of the new year, many of us find ourselves feeling hopeful, enthused, and remotivated to achieve that ever elusive goal. "This will be the year, I can feel it" we may say and that is probably true. Our brains love novelty and with the excitement of a new year in front of us, we get a "kick" of dopamine to motivate and propel us forward toward our newly set goals.



However, although we may find it easy to get the ball rolling at first, after a week or two, the novelty wears off and we may begin to fizzle out a bit. That feeling of determination may subside as the magnitude and reality of our new undertaking settles in. We may start rethinking our plans, and feeling discouraged and sluggish, because reaching our goal is taking way too long. The happy chemicals that initially focused us and got us moving are no longer providing that "reward" because, in essence, the novelty is gone. So **NOW WHAT** do we do? Where will our motivation and staying power come from?



When we are not propelled by dopamine when facing something new or exhilarated by adrenaline in those last minute, high-stress moments, we must take on different, less feeling-based tactics. Motivation is not magic and something that some people are blessed with, while others are not. Motivation comes from a general willingness to keep going and stay the course when we "just don't **FEEL** like it" anymore. In **FACT**, motivation follows action. When we get moving and take those first couple of steps to get started, as we get "warmed up", the feelings kick in again and we start feeling propelled once more.

Of course, it is also helpful to be strategic in our approach, so the following are 12 tools to help you achieve this new year's resolution.

**1. Map it Out.** Make a plan. What do you want to achieve? Now, break the goal down into realistic steps and weekly goals. If you want to adopt a healthier lifestyle, could you try a new healthy recipe once a week? Could you walk a mile on Tuesday, ride the bike for 20 min. on Thursday, and attend a class on Saturday to get started? If the project is larger, what are the specific smaller projects that will lead you to your goal? What would you be willing to do this week to get started?



**2. First things First.** What is the very **FIRST** thing you need to do to get moving? Take that first step. Complete that goal. Then focus on the next. Take it **ONE** moment, **ONE** day, **ONE** week at a time. Achieve **ONE** mini feat at a time. In time, they add up to many.

**3. Make small commitments.** Can you commit to 20 minutes of working on your goal? Or possibly 3 times a week? Set a timer, get started, and when the timer goes off, you are done for the day.

**4. Balance activity with inactivity.** Follow a "have to" with a "want to". For example, sweep the floor then take some time for tea or a chapter from your favorite book.

**5. Suppress your impulse to do more.** Even if it doesn't feel like you are doing much at first, remember you are building new habits and a lifestyle. Overdoing it can lead to mental and physical burnout. Expectations that are too lofty can lead to disappointment or eventual avoidance all together. Don't set yourself up for failure. Pace yourself.



**6. Recognize ALL or NOTHING thinking.** Everything counts. SOMETHING is better than nothing. And, even if you have a "bad day", it happens to all of us. But.. the year is not over, you have not failed, AND you don't need to give up. Tomorrow (or even later on in your day) is a new opportunity to get up off the couch of doom and start again.



**7. Celebrate small successes.** Reward yourself along the way. Don't be a negative Nancy standing on the sideline shouting " You may as well just give up. It will be just like the last time." Rather, befriend Cheerleader Chuck who says "You got this! Keep it up! Look at how far you've come. What an AMAZING transformation so far." If you just lost 5 pounds or completed step 1 of your "project", celebrate along the way. Treat yourself to a mini shopping trip, go out for a special treat, or see a movie.

**8. Take it easy.** Take your time. if you need some downtime or a couple of days off from working on your goal, take it. This will help to refresh and re-motivate you.

**9. Do it mindfully.** Take it all in. Enjoy the journey. Get out of your head. Turn your mind away from the thoughts that attempt to defeat you. Pay attention and fully experience the process with your 5 senses. What do you see? Hear? Feel, taste, or smell?



**10. Don't give up.** How many times have you given up way too early because you felt overwhelmed or it seemed too hard or too far away? Maybe you notice feelings of impatience with the process and progress. If this is the case, then break it down into smaller goals. Are you willing to do ONE thing today that moves you forward toward your goal? Can you invest 10 minutes of your time?



**11. Find a REASON to keep going.** What is your reason for doing what you are doing? What motivates or inspires you? Do you love the feeling of comfort that comes from cooking in a clean kitchen or sleeping in a tidy bed? Do love the endorphins you get from a brisk walk? Do you love the feelings of accomplishment that comes from working on your goal for the day?

**12. Embrace the feeling of TRUST.** Trust yourself and trust the process. You had the courage to start and you have what it takes to finish if you dig deep and TRUST in yourself. "If God brings you to it, He'll get you through it." If we take good care of the moments, the years will take care of themselves.