

Diets and Weight Loss: Biggest New Year's Resolution Mistakes

Want to make a resolution you'll actually keep? Stop setting yourself up for failure and get back on the healthy nutrition track with tips from Everyday Health's exclusive expert roundtable discussion.

Everyday Health: What is the biggest mistake people make when making a resolution? Are you setting yourself up for failure when you make a New Year's resolution to lose weight or get fit?



Tosca Reno (toscareno.com, eatcleandiet.com)

You aren't setting up yourself for failure by making a New Year's resolution to lose weight or get fit, so long as you have realistic goals and expectations. You will succeed so long as you make a goal and make a plan to achieve it. That is the key to success.



Anita Gadhia-Smith, PsyD (fromaddictiontorecovery.com)

Psychotherapist, author of From Addiction to Recovery

The biggest mistake is to expect too much too soon. Change happens gradually, in incremental steps. You need to have a realistic step-by-step plan. Make time in your schedule to stick with it.



Ed DeBellis, PsyD (debellistherapy.com)

I think that people set themselves up for failure when they set a goal weight. When you reach your goal weight, I believe you unconsciously stop trying — after all, you've reached your goal. It's like when a runner reaches the finish line — time to stop running and relax!



Karen R. Koenig, LCSW, MEd (eatingnormal.com)

Absolutely [you're setting yourself up for failure]. I never encourage clients to make resolutions. The notion is simplistic, overrated, and a set-up for failure. Troubled eaters and overweight people have often lost and regained weight repeatedly throughout their lives, and the last thing they need is to make yet another resolution which is likely to fail. I'm a big fan of one-day-at-a-time. The problem with resolutions is that they're misleading, as if you can make a pronouncement and then forget about it. Change comes from paying attention every minute of every day and working your tail off.



Roger Gould, MD (shrinkyourself.com)

The biggest mistake people make is ignoring the emotional eating factor. You hope to override it with good intentions and strong motivations and a new program that is guaranteed to work this time. You may be embarrassed about your weight or worried about your health or just want to look better or move with more grace. These are all powerful motivations that will drive you for a while. In the commonsense world, these motivations should prevail and take you all the way to your goal. But there is this other force inside you that will throw up a smokescreen of a thousand excuses in order to justify going back to those eating patterns that make you feel safe — patterns that have probably existed for decades, and maybe since childhood.



Torey Jones, MS, RD, LDN (nutritiouslyhappy.com)
Clinical dietitian, Chicago, Ill.

The single biggest mistake that people make is trying to change too much, too fast. Achieving a healthy body or fitness level requires permanent lifestyle change. There is no quick fix and no pill to face the challenges of our McDonald's-loving, TV-centric culture. Aim to change just one small thing at a time. Focus solely on that change until it becomes a habit, an engrained part of your life. Let's look at two New Year's resolutions. One sets you up for failure, the other for success:

- **Resolution No. 1:** I want to look good in a bathing suit by summer. Set this goal if you also want to bring pressure and self-criticism into the New Year! This is too lofty a goal. Furthermore, appearance-oriented goals are often tied to feelings of shame and self-worth.
- **Resolution No. 2:** I will add one serving (1 cup) of fruit to every breakfast. Could you achieve that? It would require some planning, but your chances are good. Moreover, it can be done without the culture shock and potential for guilt that comes along with hefty, 180-degree changes. Once this has become a habit, move on to your next attainable goal.