

Views from VanDeWalle

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January 5, 2022

New Year's Resolutions

If you are like many nearly half of the American population, you probably have a New Year's Resolution set for this year, while 38% of Americans absolutely never make New Year's Resolution according to research by University of Scranton, 2016. A majority of those resolutions are self-improvement or education related resolutions (47%), weight related (38%), money related (34%) or relationship related (31%). University of Southern California's John Monterosso who is an expert on psychology and neuroscience of self-control offers insight on how to achieve setting those resolutions.

Monterosso suggests thinking of a resolution as a special kind of plan and visualizing your future-self. If you have already made that resolution or still working to tweak it, he suggested keeping the following in mind:

- **Failed resolutions are not harmless.** Most people don't like to fail; in fact, it hurts our confidence and can actually lead to worse behavior. Keeping this in mind and accepting the fact that one might not have accomplished all that was planned is important. If you get off track, you can always start again and don't have to wait until a new year.
- **Resolutions work by linking single decisions to a bigger picture.** For example, if you have a goal of quitting smoking or eating unhealthy foods and let a craving lead to poor decisions, you might think, "it's just one cigarette or just one meal of fried foods" which may or may not lead to the continuation of a bad habit. If one takes a resolution seriously, think about the health consequences and the potential "relapse" that could occur.
- **Consider being less ambitious in your resolutions.** We tend to be overly confident when making a resolution and think we can change our behavior overnight. While it is good to be confident with your goals, be careful not to make overly ambitious goals. For example, if you plan to work out one hour/day every day of the week and have an already packed life with a career, community obligations and a family, consider starting at 20 minutes/day and work up to more minutes if time allows. Setting a good resolution requires being realistic.
- **Resolutions should not be vague.** If you set a resolution of "eating healthier." What does that mean? Does it mean drinking 64 oz. of water/day? Does it mean to include a fruit or vegetable at every meal? Write down a SMART goal that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-based.
- **The New Year is a fresh start.** Setting resolutions/goals at the first of the year helps us "clean the slate" and put past failures away. It gives us a sense of confidence and optimism. Capitalize on that.
- **Even successful resolutions can be mistakes.** If you set restrict your diet to the point of starvation or over-exercise to the point of hurting yourself, you must be able to adapt, know yourself and use common sense and wisdom to correct the resolution.

In summary, Monterosso suggests that done correctly, "resolutions play a role in great human achievements."



Extension's Help with Resolutions

As stated above, almost half of resolutions made include education or self-improvement. If you need any educational resources or materials on nearly any subject, Extension has resources. Whether it is information on a website, talking with an extension professional, utilizing an app from your smart phone, attending a face-to-face program, participation in a webinar or many other avenues, Extension works to solve complex problems for clients. If you haven't been to Extension's website recently, I encourage you to go to extension.unl.edu. There you will find an abundance of resources on topics such as food, nutrition and health, cropping & water systems, community vitality, community environment, learning child, beef systems and 4-H youth development. Consider attending a program or utilizing a resource to help you achieve a resolution or goal you may have.

For a list of extension programs in the area, visit our websites at fillmore.unl.edu or clay.unl.edu or call your local extension office.