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Tips for Habits to Stick

As we settle into the new year, many of us are working to maintain resolutions to eat better, lose weight, or reduce screen time. Historically, millions of Americans make resolutions that eventually fall by the wayside as the year goes on. Research shows that only 9% of people achieve their New Year's goals, with 43% being abandoned before the end of January.

There are several reasons why it can be easier to drop a well-intentioned goal rather than follow through. These include setting goals that are too far-fetched or simply unrealistic for your lifestyle. Whatever the reason may be, utilizing smart strategies can set you up for success in reaching your resolution goals.

When setting your goals, try using the SMART goal-setting tool.

SMART stands for:

- **Specific:** Who is involved? What are you working to achieve? When will you be doing this? Where will this goal take place? Why are you doing this? Be specific and hyper-focused when defining your goal.
- **Measurable:** Ask yourself what success will look like for you. How can you measure your progress? Consider questions such as "how much?" or "how many?"
- **Achievable:** Is this goal possible for you? How so? Is the goal within reach? Make sure you choose something you can reasonably achieve.
- **Realistic:** Assess whether you can manage the demands of reaching this goal given your current resources and lifestyle. Can your goal be accomplished in clear, manageable steps?
- **Time-bound:** A goal must be grounded in a timeframe. Decide whether you will accomplish this goal within a month or over the course of the year.

Once you have vetted your goals and ensured you have chosen the right resolutions for yourself, you can begin turning them into habits.

Break larger goals into smaller, interim goals. This allows you to take attainable steps toward success and celebrate small victories along the way. To integrate new habits seamlessly into your routine, determine what works best for your day-to-day lifestyle. If your mornings are

too packed to add one more task, set aside time after work to focus on your goal.

Consistency and accountability are key. Do the work every day, and soon your goal will become a regular part of your routine. It's also important to acknowledge that you are human—you will make mistakes or miss a day. The key is not giving up when this happens. Recommit to your goal and keep moving forward. The only true failure is giving up entirely.

Track your progress in a journal or through an app so you can see how far you've come.

By implementing these strategies when setting your goals, you'll find that your resolutions are not only within reach but can also become lifelong habits.

For more information, visit <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/how-build-healthy-habits-stick> OR contact Arianna Perkins, Wildcat Extension District Health & Nutrition Program Assistant at aoehme@ksu.edu or (620)724-8233.

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