

SECRETS TO MAKING NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS STICK

Research suggests that approximately half of all Americans make New Year's resolutions yet only 8% actually achieve them. Behavioral psychologist from Yale, Dr. Paul Marciano, offers secrets on how to be a part of that 8%.

- 1. Clearly define your goals.** Want to get in shape? What does that mean, how will you achieve it? Make goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound goals (SMART). The first step to behavior change is to clearly understand what "it" is.
- 2. Track your progress.** "If you can measure it, you can change it." The measurements will be a source of motivation as you reflect on where you started and where you are. They will also help identify sticking points in your progress so you can adjust your efforts.
- 3. Have patience.** Set realistic goals and realize that progress is never linear. Making lasting changes takes time.
- 4. Publicize your goals to friends and family.** Social support is critical. It does take personal courage and vulnerability to share something you might actually fail at, but in order to dramatically increase your odds of success, you'll want support from those around you.
- 5. Put it on your schedule.** Make your new goals a priority and actually schedule them into your calendar. Think of these time blocks as important appointments—just like an appointment with a doctor. Don't automatically schedule something else over them. "That which is scheduled gets done."
- 6. Stop "all or nothing" thinking; it's better to do something than nothing.** Are you guilty of "all or nothing" thinking? Do you ever think, "Well, I might as well get dessert since I already ate those French fries?" The difference between doing something rather than nothing is huge. If you don't have a full hour to workout at the gym, just decide to make it the best 20-minutes you can. If you have a financial emergency and you can't save what you hoped this month, just save what you can. The bottom line is, any effort towards your goal is better than no effort.
- 7. Get up, when you slip up.** None of us are perfect. Resiliency is key. Don't turn relapses or temporary failures into total meltdowns or excuses for giving up. Instead, just acknowledge the mistake and recommit to the path.

Dr. Marciano firmly believes that achieving our goals isn't about willpower. It's about developing the right skills and strategies that, with patience, will lead to success. Keep these seven secrets in mind in 2016, and you'll join the elite 8% who will be celebrating their success later in the year.

Sources: Forbes Magazine: *A Psychologist's Secrets to Making New Year's Resolutions Stick* –Kevin Kruse