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Resolving New Year's Resolutions

CLINICAL QUESTION

What does research say about New Year's resolutions?

BOTTOM LINE

The average New Year's resolution is kept for 42 days. Depending on how you define "success," ~33-55% of people who make New Year's resolutions are "successful" at one year, with "slip-ups" happening ~14 times over two years. Resolutions aimed at "goodness" might be more likely followed. Suggesting resolutions to others, especially spouses and particularly around their weight, is never a good idea. A resolution to have no resolution could save an average of \$250, but you can't put a price on following your dreams.

EVIDENCE

How long do resolutions last?

- Two studies (41 and 1066 participants): 33%-55% participants kept their resolution at one year.^{1,2}
- 200 participants: 19% maintained resolutions at two years.³

- Mean resolution duration: 42 days.⁴

What are popular resolutions?

- Physical health (example: exercise) (33%) and weight loss (20%).¹
- More unique resolutions included: Watching all Star Wars movies,² vowing to never be in a rock band again,⁴ and spending more time with spouse in the bedroom² (since not specified in the study, we are unsure if this refers to getting more sleep or something else entirely).

Are some resolutions more likely to be kept?

- 41 participants: Resolutions aimed at “goodness” (example: “uplifting your employees”) were more likely to be kept than diet/exercise resolutions (77% versus ~30%) at 11 months.²

Should I buy a scale to monitor my weight loss resolution?

- 52 students:⁴ Compared monitoring with a scale versus no monitoring.
 - No difference in weight at three months.

Should I give up after slipping up?

- 200 people:³ Mean number of slip-ups over two years: 14.

Should I suggest resolutions for others to follow?

- 61 university students:⁵ More likely to stick to personal goals at one month than imposed goals.
 - Limitations: Did not investigate potential harms of suggesting resolutions to one’s significant other.

CONTEXT

- Canadians spend \$252 per year on failed resolutions.⁶
- Although we are often told “the time to act is now,” there are no studies looking at whether the time to act is actually later, such as after a nap.⁷
- New Year’s Resolution inspiration is available from *The Office* [here](#).

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Neither author makes new year’s resolutions. One author can’t even stay up until midnight.

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