



The Wellness Wire

Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

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An initiative of the Faculty Assembly Steering Committee, the Office of Medical Student Support Services, the Fit & Well Committee, the Assistant Dean of Faculty Development, and the Division of Education and Faculty Development in the Department of Humanities, Health, and Society.

Greetings as we all learn to reframe our lives during these unprecedented times. Recognizing that figuring out our work and home lives during a pandemic can be challenging, the Faculty Assembly Steering Committee has launched this initiative to provide resources for faculty and staff to foster our collective well-being.

Editor: Greg Schneider, MD

Resolving 2021

It's been a long time since I have made formal New Year's Resolutions, but every year some new goals sneak into my consciousness. "I'm going to exercise more." "I'm going keep in touch better with friends." The details change, but these two themes recur: more/different/better exercise and connectedness with friends and family. In general, I have pretty good success on the exercise front, but I falter when it comes to reaching out to others. Why is that? What holds me back? Why do some resolutions succeed while others never get off the ground?

Like most human behaviors, I suspect it is some combination of love and fear, churned through the food processor of reason and emotion. By my crude calculation, fear often trumps love, but love is a much better long-term motivator. Emotion, meanwhile, is far superior to reason as a spur to action (or inaction). It strikes me that the key to resolving is aiming toward something you like/love to do and creating the feeling-state to make it happen.

Forgive yourself

It's OK if you have failed in the past to keep a resolution or even to take the first step. Many years have passed in which I have not written a single one of my newly declared "monthly letters." 'Everybody likes receiving actual written letters,' my New Year's self muses. Remind yourself that very few are successful in changing routines the first time around; self-compassion sets a much better state for improvement than self-criticism.

Pick something that's inherently rewarding

Here's where the love comes in. Instead of picking the typical goal, like losing weight, think instead about the positive state of being you are seeking. "I want to be healthy and strong" can be a better place to start than "I hate the way I look in the mirror."

Get specific

Once you've found that positive state—"I want to feel rested; I want to feel more connected to friends and family"—then put some meat on the bones. Make it tangible, realistic, and within a reasonable time frame. (Darn those SMART goals we talk about in our Clinical Skills courses: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.) Walking once a week with your family might make a lot more sense than running an Iron Man Marathon . . .

This past year was chock full with enough fear and anxiety for a lifetime. Let's resolve to make 2021 filled with warmer, care-filled moments, in whatever form gives you inspiration. So go do that 20-minute high intensity workout or have that weekly game of chess with your best friend.

Don't forget about our interactive [Wellness Wall](#).



Editor: Suzanne Minor, MD

We've been working so hard for the last year over the course of this pandemic, making it happen and doing so quite successfully. Many of us may have an inner critic that has pushed us to be so successful. While this may work during crises, in the long run, it's not sustainable. Self-compassion is vital to counter this inner critic, so that we can optimally function and have high quality of inner life.

Dr. Neff also offers [guided meditations and exercises](#) that you can do to develop your self-compassion. The guided meditation videos range from five to 24 minutes, so even if you only have a few minutes, you can practice! The eight exercises are practical, concrete assignments with detailed instructions. Examples include: Exercise 1: How would you treat a friend; Exercise 7: Identifying what we really want; and Exercise 8: Taking care of the caregiver.

Another excellent [article](#) on self-compassion describes some specific tips you can use to divert or quiet our inner critic. One of the tips is to use the “VARY” acronym devised by psychoanalyst Nina Savelle-Rocklin, PsyD. By validating, acknowledging, and reassuring ourselves, we can reframe that inner critical voice.

Now that we've taken a deep dive into self-compassion, let's detail some resolution resources! At the HWCOP, we teach our students about how to use the tools of motivational interviewing to assist patients in setting and achieving goals. As I read through these resources, I was struck by how similar many of them are!

This [article](#) from the American Psychological Association encourages us to start small and change just one behavior at a time. “By making your resolutions realistic, there is a greater chance that you will keep them throughout the year, incorporating healthy behavior into your everyday life.”

This [article](#) from Very Well Mind explains ten psychological strategies for helping you to stick to your goals. By focusing our goals and planning ahead, we can increase our success with following through and achieving them.

This Lifhack [article](#) describes ten tips for making your new year's resolutions come true. One tip is to push yourself by not setting limits for yourself, while another tip reminds you to know when to take a break. Sometimes, finding the balance can take practice!

This theconversation.com [article](#) offers nine tips to give yourself the best shot at sticking to New Year's resolutions. One tip is to be sure to link resolutions to meaningful values. Tapping into what we find important and worthwhile is also a tool that can be useful in staving off burnout!

