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## New Year's Resolutions

by  
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**New Year's Resolutions**... who needs 'em? Seriously folks, do you really sit down and make a list of things you've always said you're going to change thinking you're actually, finally, going to do it? Why waste your time and depress yourself even more by making a promise to yourself you have no intention of keeping. If you haven't changed by now in those areas hang it up... it ain't gonna happen.

Don't get me wrong... I'm a goal oriented person and always have been. To me goals are a necessity for life and a sure fire ticket for success, but New Year's Resolutions aren't goals... they're exercises in futility for the most part. Those things we pick as potential self renovation plans are things that have been hanging around our neck for pretty much all our lives and they are so ingrained within us it will take an act of God to rid them from our life. By the way, that's how I stopped smoking after 20 years of 1-2 packs a day, I turned it over to God. I had tried... and tried... and tried to stop smoking, sometimes going as long as two months without putting one of those dangerous little white sticks between my lips. But... put me in the middle of a party scene with drinks, laughter and cigarette smoke hanging so thick around me and before the night's over I'm bumming a cigarette and then running out to buy a pack of my very own.

Then one night I felt so frustrated at myself for being so weak I told the Lord..."Now you know I really want to stop smoking, but I can't do it on my own. If YOU want me to stop you're gonna have to take away the desire and not let it come back." You know what happened? I awoke that next morning in the Spring of 1975 and found myself NOT wanting a cigarette and haven't wanted one since. It truly was an act of God.

It is said that over 100 Million Americans will put their discipline on the line by making resolutions this year. It must be a popular thing to do... why else would so many go to the trouble of making their list? Women more often make resolutions than men by 54% to 46%. Does that mean men are more content with who they are? Let's look at what studies found to be the top 10 list of most favorite resolutions and see if you're in the crowd anywhere.

Here's the top 10 New Year's Resolutions according to a variety of studies. The order is not always the same in each study, but these seem to be the most popular.

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1- <b>Spend more time with family and friends</b> | 6- <b>Enjoy life more</b>          |
| 2- <b>Exercise more to become physically fit</b>  | 7- <b>Get out of debt</b>          |
| 3- <b>Lose XX number of pounds</b>                | 8- <b>Learn something new</b>      |
| 4- <b>Quit smoking</b>                            | 9- <b>Volunteer to help others</b> |
| 5- <b>Quit drinking</b>                           | 10- <b>Get organized</b>           |

Do we see ourselves any where in this scenario... hmmm? Do you think you can succeed at disciplining yourself to accomplish the impossible? Alan Marlatt, **Director of University of Washington's Addictive Behavior Research Center** has been studying this phenomenon for over 20 years and he has some words for those of you who are wise to listen.

**To be successful with your own resolutions, Marlatt, who has studied the subject for more than 20 years, suggests:**

- Have a strong initial commitment to make a change. (*You must really want to change.*)
- Have coping strategies to deal with problems that will come up. (*Don't expect a bed of roses.*)
- Keep track of your progress. The more monitoring you do and feedback you get, the better you will do. (*Know the score and the score will improve.*)

**Sure-fire ingredients for setting yourself up for resolution failure, he adds, include:**

- Not thinking about making resolutions until the last minute. (*If you haven't made it yet... forget it.*)
- Reacting on New Year's Eve and making your resolutions based on what's bothering you or is on your mind at that time. (*Don't be mood motivated.*)
- Framing your resolutions as absolutes by saying, **"I will never do X again."** (*Allow some wiggle room.*)

And Mr. Marlatt has a final word of advice for everyone who participates in this yearly exercise.

**"Take credit for success when you achieve a resolution, but it is a mistake to blame yourself if you fail. Instead, look at the barriers that were in your way. See how you can do better the next time and figure out a better plan to succeed. You do get to try again and can make behavior changes throughout the year, not only at New Year's."**

Folks, the bottom line is...it's never too late to change some areas of your life... if that's what you really want to do, **but** if your motivation is a vanity founded want as opposed to life enhancing need you're probably spinning your wheels. If you need to change to live longer, or to even have a life, then go for it with gusto, but begin with the knowledge that **"I WILL CHANGE...** not just **I WANT TO CHANGE"**.

Take that person you are and enjoy your life while you may and have the happiest of New Years!!