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Set realistic goals to avoid disappointment

New Year resolutions invariably involve some sort of goal setting, for example, signing up to a new exercise regime.

Most of us have good intentions to achieve our goals, but many of us get side-tracked or easily disappointed and do not follow through our plans. How can we be more effective in our goal pursuits?

First of all, we are more likely to be successful if we pursue goals because they are interesting and valuable to us, and not because we are motivated by guilt, feel pressured by others or want to gain their approval. It is also important that goals are realistic, specific, and have a short-term and long-term focus.

It also helps to have plans in terms of how we can shield our goals from distraction by developing an appropriate response (e.g., “If I intend to go for a run after I return home from work, I will not switch on the TV until after my run”).

It is also important to develop plans as to where, when and with whom (if applicable) we will pursue our goal. Sometimes we succeed in our goal pursuits but other times we fail. It is OK to fail sometimes, but repeated failure will undermine our motivation.

Hence, it is important that we are flexible with our goals and adjust them when faced with failure to prevent giving up altogether.

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