

Post-Holiday Promise Breakers

How to keep from experiencing the anxiety that comes from making a New Year's resolution you probably won't keep.

By Faust Ruggiero, M.S.

The new year is rapidly approaching, and with it are all the New Year's resolutions we make to convince ourselves that we are going to stop living in a way which simply does not work for us. Here comes those promises to exercise more, lose weight, get organized, save more / spend less, quit smoking, etc., etc.

Did you ever wonder why people decide to make New Year's resolutions? Also, who are these people who continue making promises they know they will never keep? A resolution is a firm decision to do, or not do something. It is, in its truest form, a promise to oneself that something is going to change. For people willing to commit themselves to their resolutions, they may add a component to their lives that provides them with a more productive way of living, and considerably more happiness. It also has the added advantage of increased self-esteem.

For so many others, however, a New Year's resolution is nothing more than a post-holiday set up. People make New Year's resolutions because, quite frankly, they have misbehaved for the other eleven months of the year. Resolutions, such as those we make as we usher in a new year, are simply quick-fix ways of convincing ourselves that we're going to do something. It helps momentarily remove the guilt that comes along with routinely making and sticking with decisions that caused problems for us. In short, we want the gains, but we're not overly enthusiastic about the work.

When we make, but do not keep New Year's resolutions, four things happen:

1. We continue to either do something that causes us problems, or not do something that would help us improve the quality of our lives.
2. We developed the ability to stay in patterns of living that range from mildly problematic to harmful and toxic.
3. We begin to define ourselves as people who are willing to be stuck in ways of living that are either dysfunctional, or at the very least, problematic for us.
4. We engage in behaviors that can have a serious impact on our self-esteem.

There is a strong correlation between resolution breakers and everyday procrastinators. Think about it. We make resolutions that are designed to be executed *somewhere down the road*. That somewhere down the road philosophy is

the definition of a procrastinator. Procrastinators say they will, sometime, and never really get to it. That's because they never intended to. Resolution makers like our friendly procrastinators, all too often, never intended to do it either. It sounds good for the moment, convinces us that we are going to do something, and may even look good, short term, to those who hear us make the resolution.

So, how do you avoid the New Year's resolution bust? More to the point, how do you become a person who doesn't have to make pointless resolutions that you will never commit to, and avoid all the negativity that comes from the failure associated with those broken promises? The new year is almost here. Instead of becoming the procrastinator who is not going to make the changes, here's a little strategy to avoid the post-holiday resolution blues, and take some steps to actually change your life.

Anyone who is going to make change to improve the quality of their lives takes these five steps.

1. They make a decision to change something in their lives.
2. They research and acquire all the necessary information they will need to help them make the change.
3. They formulate a plan based on the information with actionable steps that will carry them to their goal.
4. They, without hesitation, institute the plan, NOW!
5. They consistently evaluate what they're doing, and make those little tweaks that keep the plan moving forward.

There's a world of difference between living life as an action plan doer, and a resolution promise breaker. Do yourself a favor. Become an active player in your own life. Decide what you want to change, get all the information you need to make that happen, and get down to business, without hesitation. If you do, you can discard that old ridiculous New Year's resolution foolishness, and begin to really feel good about yourself. Here's to a productive, and genuinely Happy New Year!

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