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Stop Setting Yourself Up for Failure with New Years Resolutions

Year after year you see the same thing. As we approach the new year every blog you subscribe to will publish an article on setting New Years Resolutions. It doesn't matter what their blog is about. Got a blog on toy dogs? How about collecting porcelain tea cups? They all find a way to incorporate New Years Resolutions!

I'm hear to tell you to stop. Enough is enough. Setting goals is vital to success but the standard New Years Resolution is counterproductive.

How most people do it

Most people sit down and in 10 minutes rip out a list of 10 things that the will change. I will stop smoking. I will lose 50 pounds. I will exercise every day and get in shape. I will work an extra 10 hours a week and get that promotion. The list goes on and on.

This list quickly gets buried under a mound of papers and doesn't get seen again until six months down the road. One day you clean up the office and come across the list. Wow, this is good stuff. How much did I accomplish?

Nada!

Add insult to injury

Not only did you accomplish nothing with this foray into goal setting, you actually set yourself back. Now you have another example of how you can't keep with a goal setting program. Every time you fail to stick to your New Years Resolutions you further entrench a lack of confidence. It quickly becomes a self fulfilling prophecy and makes it easier to fail the following year.

There is a better way

No, I'm not trying to sell you a system. Any *good* goal setting program will tell you the same thing. At the heart of any good goal setting system are these five items.

Vision: Determine what kind of life you want to lead and what you want to achieve. Do you want to travel to exotic destinations? Do you want a beautiful house in the mountains? Do you want to meet the man (or woman) of your dreams? Write it all down then condense it into a compact statement.

One good goal setting metaphor is traveling across country. Your vision is your destination (in this case Seattle Washington). The more clearly you can see it the less likely you'll end up in El Paso Texas!

Commitment and Desire: Now that you know what you want you need to emotionalize it. Don't skip this step. Goals without the underlying desire are much harder to accomplish. Unless you can push through on willpower you'll fall back into old habits.

Having a good vision makes this much easier. It's hard to get excited by a goal like "no more smoking." It is easy to stay committed if you can visualize the benefit. See your bank account growing. See yourself being more fit and athletic. Feel the pain of your current pattern to help drive you (this give you both the push and the pull).

Plan: You don't have to write down every step. You don't need to see the entire path. You just need to know the next few things that need done. This is where your actual goals come in. What do you need to accomplish in order to achieve your vision? Write them down. Be specific. Don't say "I want to make more money." Say "I want to make \$250k a year before taxes running a website devoted to wealth and life balance through entrepreneurship. I will achieve this no later than 12/31/2009 and will devote 10 hours a week to developing content."

Going back to our goal setting metaphor, your plan is your route. It is a step by step path. You don't have to know every mile of the way but you better know your next turn!

Repetition: Wake up 10 minutes early and see your vision. Then get up and read your vision and goals. Do this also before you go to bed.

This accomplishes two things. First, it keeps you focused on your goals. It keeps you on track and keeps your goals in front of you. Second, it drives your goals into your subconscious. It is much easier to keep on track if you don't always have to be thinking about it. Let your subconscious do the work!

Using our goal setting metaphor, this is going over your plan several times to make sure you stay on track. The better you know your route and destination the easier the trip is.

Review: Review your progress weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly. How have you done with your goals? Do you need to revise them? Do you need to set new goals? Is your vision still accurate?

How does this apply to our metaphor? As you drive you are constantly receiving feedback. You review your progress to determine if a change is needed. Maybe you need to call and let someone know you will be early. Maybe you need to plan an overnight stop. Maybe you need to change your route to go around a traffic jam.

Tools to help

I've used several goal setting systems in the past. All of them are good. Each has their own strengths and weaknesses. Many are part of larger self-help systems. Tony Robbins, Stephen Covey, etc all cover goals.

[Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill](#): This is the original self help book and is still just as valid today. If I had just one book on achieving your goals to recommend it would be this. It has made more people millionaires than any other book, course, or system.

[Goals! by Brian Tracy](#): This is a full featured goal setting program. If you don't already have a vision or you are new to effective goal setting this is the product for you.

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