



Set SMART Goals for 2016

I have a complicated relationship with the holiday season. I love the idea of peace and goodwill and people coming together to celebrate something, whatever it may be. But what were once simple celebrations with family and friends have, over time, turned into weeks-long extravaganzas that strain our finances, not to mention our belts. By the end of the year, we're vowing to mend our ways and regain control of our appetites — and we begin crafting New Year's resolutions.

I'm not fond of resolutions. It seems to me they are doomed to fail. For one thing, they often come from a negative space, as punishment for overindulgence or neglect. For another, they are often too ambitious, seeking to change behaviors (or bodies) developed over years in a matter of weeks or months. Finally, resolutions are frequently too vague. It's not that I don't agree with our attempts to improve ourselves; I simply think there is a better way to go about it. My suggestion is to set SMART goals instead.

SMART is an acronym first used by George T. Doran in the November 1981 issue of *Management Review*, and while SMART goals are most frequently used in business, this kind of goal setting can be applied to any situation. SMART goals are:

Specific: Make your goal clear and write it down. When writing resolutions, we typically make statements such as "This year I will lose weight" or "I resolve to save money." When setting SMART goals, be specific: "I will lose 10 pounds" or "I will save \$10 every week."

Measurable: The best way to know if you are on the right track is to measure and keep track of your progress as you work toward your goal. A measurable goal will

answer "How" questions: How much more weight did I lift? How much money have I put into savings? How many times have I cooked at home this week?

Achievable: It's great to have a goal that is challenging, but it's not helpful to set a goal you are unlikely to reach. Keep your goal attainable. Again, ask yourself "How": How can I realistically achieve this goal?

Relevant: The goal you set must be important to you. Don't let someone set a goal for you or set a goal because it seems like the right thing to do. Ask yourself "Why": Why am I setting this particular goal? Why is it worthwhile to me? Why is this the right time to do it?

Time-bound: Goals are easier to accomplish when you have a deadline. If you have a large goal, break it into smaller mini-goals, setting calendar dates to achieve each step along the way. Ask yourself "When": When do I want to accomplish this goal?

Finally, making your goal public is a good way to help you achieve it. Post your goal on social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, or just on the original in-house social media site: the refrigerator door. Tell your family and friends what you want to accomplish and ask for their support. You may find setting SMART goals helps you make changes both large and small — and makes old-fashioned resolutions a thing of the past. ✨

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