



5 effective strategies to achieve your New Year's resolutions

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Forward relevance:

A personal strategy of designing meaningful (actionable) goals that help you create your future-self, instead of looking at your past-self to overcome deficits or break habits.

**Finding a meaningful resolution to focus on is just
25% of achieving your goals!**

Here are *five effective strategies* to help you achieve
your goals, besides applying forward relevance.



1. MAKE YOUR GOALS S.M.A.R.T.

Make your goals **S.M.A.R.T.**

Specific: Specify your goals - be specific about what you want to achieve, when, how, why, and with whom. The more specific you are, the more likely you will be to achieve your goals. Identifying limitations is also a way of being specific about what is and is not possible.

Make your goals S.**M**.A.R.T.

Measurable: Making your goals measurable is a way to identify what you want to see when achieving your goals. “*Feeling good*” is not specifically measurable but living a healthy lifestyle by “*taking a 15-minute stroll during every lunch break*” is. Make sure that you can measure the outcome of your goal.

Make your goals S.M.**A**.R.T.

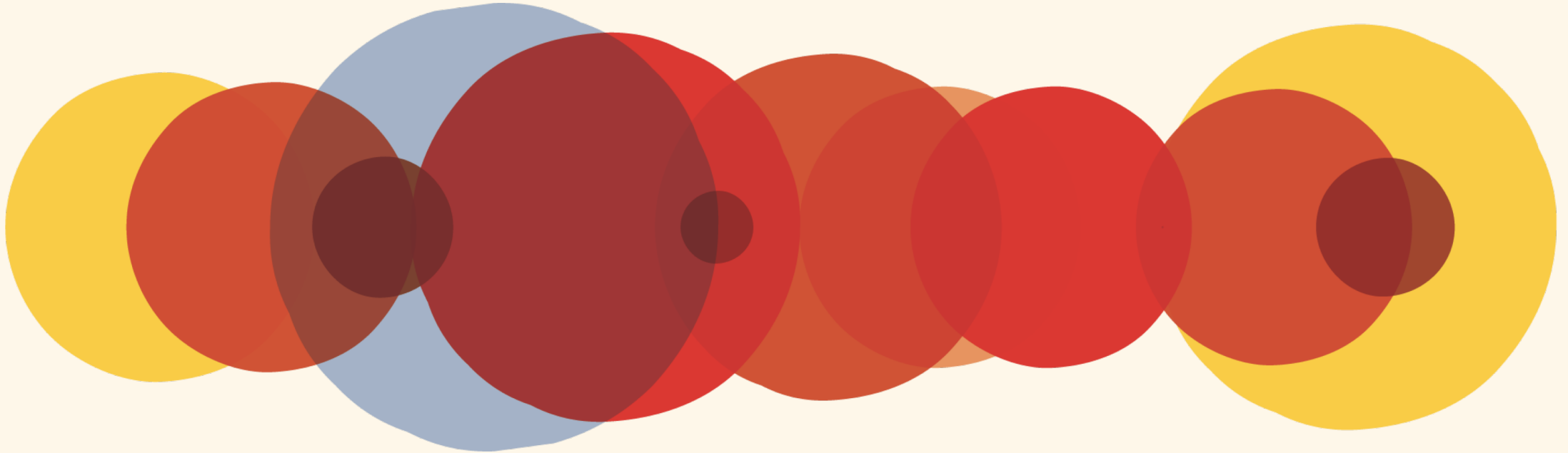
Attainable: Make sure your goals are attainable. First, try to define goals that you believe are reachable within your capacity (time, effort, resources, other commitments). If your goals are too broad, or personal limitations don't allow you to achieve your goals, then you will surely fail in achieving them. Also, watch out for goals you cannot fulfill yourself.

Make your goals S.M.A.**R**.T.

Realistic: Make sure your goals are relevant and realistic for you to achieve. Identify the source of motivation for achieving your goals and ensure you are committing to your goals because you *really* want to. This requires some deeper reflection, so feel free to revisit your goals (throughout the year) to make sure of their relevance. The ‘*Future Relevance*’ approach is a great way to focus on this point.

Make your goals S.M.A.R.T.

Timely: Time management is key in helping you achieve your goals. Make sure to set deadlines for yourself and don't be too stringent about them. Allow for some flexibility, but not too much.



2. CHANGE BIG GOALS INTO BITE-SIZED LEARNING GOALS

Change big goals into bite-sized **learning goals**

Break bigger goals down into smaller (manageable) goals and try to frame them as “*learning*” goals. So, if you don’t achieve all of them within the time specified, at least you still worked toward achieving some of them. Don’t beat yourself up if you don’t achieve all your goals. Framing them as learning goals is also a great way to discover what you did well, what you liked about working on them, and what you can do better - or differently - next time.

3. FOCUS ON **PLANNING**



Focus on **planning**

Planning is a key strategy in achieving your goals. Setting some achievable goalposts and a timeline at the outset can help you plan to achieve more challenging goals over time (e.g. stopping smoking, writing a book, getting a degree). Successive achievements of goals throughout the year (and celebrating small wins) boosts motivation and helps you stay on track without losing focus of the main goal you want to achieve by year-end.

The devil is in the detail and the science shows that finding strategies to help you plan activities step-by-step is paramount to achieving longer-term goals. One of these step-by-step strategies is called “*intention implementation*”.

Intention implementation: Saying for example that you “*want to go to the gym*” doesn’t mean you will. Using intention implementation as part of a short-term planning strategy can help you effectively transform intentions into behaviors. This is done by activating your goals using an “*if-then*” approach: when **time X** occurs (time and/or place), a specific do-able **activity Y** should be initiated and completed to attain **goal Z**. For example, “*If/when I pass the supermarket on Sunday, I will buy groceries for the week so that I can cook food at home to improve my eating habits.*”

4. HAVE **OTHERS** HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS



Have **others** help you achieve your goals

It's commonly known that we achieve more together. The word TEAM is often used as an acronym to highlight the benefits of collaboration: “*Together Everyone Achieves More*”. To achieve your New Year's resolutions, team up! Try to find other people that share the same goals as you and find ways to work on those goals together. Working on goals together is more fun and can help you stay on track.



5. MAKE YOUR GOALS PUBLIC

Make your goals **public**

Behavioral commitment research shows that if you make your goals public to others, you are more likely to stick to them. Write them down, share them with others, and have others remind you of your (verbal) commitments you made to achieve them. The science shows that we don't like to be inconsistent with our previous behaviors, especially when we make them public. You will need this when your motivation is low, or your interest has dropped. Expect this to happen, so tackle it before it does!



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