

Resident Reporter



Western
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Realize your New Year's resolutions with S.M.A.R.T. goal-setting

With the approach of each new year comes reflection on the past, and hopes and ambitions for what's in store for the future. We smile at fond memories and ponder how things could have gone even better. Insert your New Year's Resolutions! The following guidelines will bring you closer to reaching those notoriously elusive vows.

CREATE S.M.A.R.T. GOALS!

Before reading any further, jot down your objectives for 2008. From now on, you will apply the S.M.A.R.T. instrument to setting goals: **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, & Timely.**

Specific: A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general one. Goals should be straightforward and easy, and should emphasize what you want to have happen. Specifics help us to focus our efforts and clearly define what we are going to do.

To be specific, you must answer the six "W" and one "H":

- **Who:** Who is involved?
- **What:** What do I want to accomplish/do? Use action words.
- **Where:** Identify a location.
- **When:** Establish a timeframe and deadlines.
- **Which:** Identify requirements and constraints.
- **Why:** Why is this important? Specify reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.
- **How:** How are you going to do it?

(EXAMPLE: *General goal:* Get in shape. *Specific Goal:* Join a health club and work out three days a week.)

Measurable:

If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress. Build several short-term or small objectives into the overall goal. This keeps you on track to reach your target dates. Meeting a short-term objective will exhilarate you,



giving you the motivation to capture your overall resolution. To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as, "How much?" "How many?" and "How will I know when it is accomplished?"

(EXAMPLE: "I want to run three marathons, of three miles each, by my birthday.")

Attainable:

A goal requires your commitment and needs to stretch you slightly so you feel you can do it. Setting a goal too high will cause you to feel overwhelmed and intimidated, before you even get started, and you probably won't keep the commitment. Your subconscious will stop you from even giving it your best.

Set goals that you can attain with some effort. Too difficult, and you set the stage for failure, but too low sends the message that you aren't very capable. Set the bar high enough for a satisfying achievement.

When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. See yourself as worthy

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of these goals and develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished probably seemed easy simply because they were a labor of love.

A goal can be both high and realistic.

Realistic: To qualify as realistic, a goal must be doable. You must be both willing and able to do the work, and possess the necessary skills. Your goal is probably realistic if you truly believe that it can be achieved, based on past accomplishments and current conditions of your lifestyle. A realistic project may push your skills and knowledge, but it shouldn't break you.

Timely: A goal should be grounded within a realistic time frame, to create a sense of urgency. "Someday" isn't going to cut it. Anchor your aim within a measureable timeframe, and you've set your unconscious mind into motion toward your target.

You are now much better equipped to achieve your resolutions in 2008, and in years to come. Look at the objectives you noted before reading about the S.M.A.R.T. process. Evaluate each goal. Now, make any changes necessary to make your goal SMART! Following are the 10 most common New Year's resolutions. You are likely striving for some, or all, of them. Apply what you've learned and devise a "SMART" plan to make your dreams come true.

TOP 10 NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

1. Spend More Time with Family and Friends.
2. Fit in Fitness.
3. Lose weight.
4. Quit Smoking.
5. Enjoy Life More.
6. Quit Drinking.
7. Get Out of Debt.
8. Learn Something New.
9. Help Others.
10. Get Organized.