

NEW YEAR, NEW  
YOU? HOW TO  
MAKE REALISTIC  
RESOLUTIONS AND  
DELIVER ON THEM

New Year Goals:

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# About this workbook

At everywoman, we deliver a range of innovative products and resources that unlock the potential and talent of women in business globally. Whether you're just starting out, looking to progress your career, or even to build and develop your own enterprise, the everywomanNetwork provides a wealth of personal development resources, advice and inspiration to address the challenges you face at key stages in business. We produce workbooks on topics that matter most to our members and we're constantly listening to your views to give you the tools you need to propel you through your life's work, at a time and place that suits you.

**Welcome to our workbook, New Year, New You? How to make realistic resolutions and deliver on them.**

Following a tumultuous year, the dawn of a new one can herald in a rediscovered sense of determination, motivation and ambition. You may find yourself asking what you'd like to change about your life, what new habits you'd like to form, and which old ones you'd like to break. And you won't be alone, with statistics showing that for many of us, the idea of setting a new year 'resolution' has irresistible draw. All good news, on many fronts.

The less positive news is that the road to goal completion is littered with many habits broken. While you may be in the enviable position of having smashed a key goal last year, the reality is that there may be plenty of others that fell by the wayside. The reasons why that may be the case are varied and complex, and that's something we'll explore — understanding the psychology of goal-setting will set you up for better self-awareness and future success.

Following on from that, we'll look at some of your key goals for the year, and uncover some of the practical techniques you can employ to give yourself the best shot at achieving them. Tangible action is what turns a dream into a goal plan.

We'd love to know how you get on – email us at [karenmax@everywoman.com](mailto:karenmax@everywoman.com) or tweet us [@everywomanuk](https://twitter.com/everywomanuk).

Max & Karen  
and the everywoman team

# New year, new you?

Something about the dawning of a new year makes us yearn for change and improvement. So we determine to go about things differently and we make resolutions – most of which, statistics show, don't even last the whole of January.

In fact, YouGov Omnibus statistics for the UK at the end of 2019 showed that:

- Only one in five (22%) Brits hoped to improve themselves in some way in 2020 by making a New Year's resolution.
- Young Brits are by far the most likely to be making resolutions, with more than a third (37%) of 18 to 24 year olds intending to do so. By contrast, only 15% of the oldest Britons - those aged 65 and older – will do so.
- Women were more likely than men to make a resolution – 24% vs. 19%.
- Only 27% of people managed to keep them all.

That doesn't mean that our intentions are not good or worthy of success. It might simply mean we are going about them in the wrong way. Let's make 2021 the year we approach things differently.

## Why resolutions fail

The main reasons resolutions fail fall into the following categories:

- Too ambitious – we overwhelm ourselves with a goal we are unlikely to achieve.
- Unrealistic – we have not thought them through properly or provided enough time.
- Too risky – we have not built in the possibility of failure or the need for flexibility.
- Based on others' ideas – things we have come to believe we 'should' do.
- Based on negatives – I must not, I will not....rather than a positive intention.
- Lack of focus – allowing ourselves to be distracted.
- No process for tracking our progress.

Sometimes what happens with resolutions is that we suffer what writer Tal Ben-Shahar calls the 'arrival fallacy', the belief that when you arrive at a certain destination, you'll be happy. Unfortunately, as he says, arriving rarely makes you as happy as you expect. That's because part of the human condition is that we spend so much time expecting to arrive at a certain result that it has already been factored in to our happiness – we've adjusted to the new situation. It may also make us continue to pile on the goals, always looking into the future, rather than appreciating what we have in the here and now.

Did you make a resolution last year? Did you achieve it? If you did then you probably don't need this workbook! But if, like the rest of us, your success was partial or zero, let's examine the reasons for that here.

# 2020 RESOLUTIONS

<p><b>My main resolution was:</b> .....</p> <p><b>On a scale of 1-10, how much of it did I achieve?</b> .....</p> <p><b>What was the main reason for that score?</b> .....</p>
<p><b>My second resolution was:</b> .....</p> <p><b>On a scale of 1-10, how much of it did I achieve?</b> .....</p> <p><b>What was the main reason for that score?</b> .....</p>
<p><b>My other resolutions were:</b>.....</p> <p><b>On a scale of 1-10, how much of those did I achieve?</b> .....</p> <p><b>What was the main reason for that score?</b> .....</p>

It's interesting, that when you write down the reasons and look at them on the page or screen, you can instantly see what is a real reason and what is simply an excuse. So be honest with yourself and revisit those reasons. Are they real or are you trying to justify your own lack of commitment?

The next question is how many of these resolutions have you made in previous years? And, be honest, how close have you come to achieving them? Many of us make the same resolution every year – for example, to get fit. We start with every good intention in January – here in the UK, the coldest, greyest, most miserable month. We decide that we'll take up running and push ourselves by entering a 10k race to be held in the spring. Before we know it, work or family commitments reassert themselves and we cancel the evening run. It's rainy or freezing cold outside so when the alarm goes off at 6am, we pull the duvet over our heads and hit the snooze button; or worse, we go at it like superheroes and end up injured. That's a classic unrealistic goal, with a dash of over-ambition for good measure. (To be clear, I'm not talking about adapting or discarding a resolution for good reason, in which case it would be okay to make the same resolution a second year.)

# Tools for success

**The key tools for success are motivation, context, planning and perseverance.**

If you're going to succeed at anything, it has to be something that really motivates you. For many years, I wanted to learn Italian. I love the country and the way of life and would love to spend more time there. I did business there for many years but the business was always conducted in English, so there was no reason for me to learn the language. Some years later, my stepson married an Italian woman. Her parents didn't speak any English and they were bringing their children up to be bilingual. Suddenly I found my motivation!

That's another important point – these resolutions need to work as part of your whole life. If they are rooted in business that's fine, but **you're more likely to be successful if you consider the context in which they need to be achieved.** The resolutions most frequently made for 2020 were to exercise more and save money. You might decide you need more exercise in your life and to get it by playing tennis. How realistic is this though? It may be something you want to do (good motivation) but how will you make the time? How far away are the courts? How expensive is this resolution likely to be?

Answering questions like these will help you to make a plan and the best plans are SMART – specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and timetabled. We'll come on to that further into the workbook.

Perseverance – or the discipline of sticking to your goal – is critical. **You won't succeed if you can't stick with it, so keep your goal top of mind.** Make yourself a visual reminder – make it your screensaver, stick it on the window you look out of from your desk, stick it on the fridge door. That way, whatever you are doing, you will be reminded of what you want to achieve and your focus will increase.

**Another good idea is to share your goal.** Whenever I have volunteered for challenges to raise money for charity, I always shout about the commitment I have made. Quite apart from helping me fundraise, it means I HAVE do it – too many people will know if I don't achieve my goal and my pride will not allow that!

In the same vein, recruit a buddy. Someone who may have the same interest and will do it alongside you or just someone who will be a mentor and hold you to your commitments.



# Goals or intentions?

A word about goals versus intentions. Increasingly we have come to understand that **living in the here and now – mindfully, in other words, is important for our wellbeing.**

It is obviously good to have goals, to strive to improve and develop, but by their nature, goals tend to be rational and based in the future. If we're not careful, we can get onto a hamster wheel with an endless cycle of make or break goal-setting and this can lead to failure, or at the very least to 'arrival fallacy'.

Some people feel that setting intentions feels less onerous and therefore encourages us to succeed. **Intentions tend to come from the heart and are based in the moment.** Setting an intention allows you to focus on how you want to be right now.

Can you have both? Natalie Sisson, a New Zealand author and entrepreneur says you can. She says the key thing to understand is that focusing on your intentions does not mean you give up your goals.

**“It actually means you’ve found a great partner to achieve your goals with. I like to think of intention as your personal trainer. It gives you the daily rhythm, motivation and accountability you need to transform yourself.”**

So what is an intention and how do you set it? Setting an intention in this context is about frequently reminding yourself of what you want within the framework of the wider plan you have set for your goal. **It is about being mindful, on a daily basis, of the steps you're taking in the overall direction of travel.** Naz Beheshti, contributor for Forbes Women talks about 'GWIs' – goals with paired intention.

**“Focusing .... on small daily intentions helps us avoid getting overwhelmed by ambitious long-term goals. We know our GWI's are there, but we organize our days around gradual, incremental steps and learn to enjoy the journey without getting too anxious about the destination.”**

Supposing your goal is to gain a promotion. You establish your goal, engage your rational mind and make a plan to achieve it within a certain timescale. But alongside that, you set daily intentions that move you in the same direction. When you have your next one-to-one with your boss for example, you set the intention to have the best meeting you can possibly have, which underpins your goal by reminding your boss how clearly you think and how focused you are.

If your goal is to run a marathon, you will have a training plan and daily and weekly running targets to meet. Alongside that your daily intention may be to ensure you are properly hydrated today or to eat carbs before your run, to ensure a supply of glucose in your blood for additional energy – smaller, mindful steps along the way to the bigger goal.



## EXERCISE

MAKE A LIST HERE OF YOUR GOALS AND THE INTENTIONS YOU CAN PAIR WITH THEM.

GOALS	INTENTIONS

People who achieve results this way also recommend **practising gratitude**. This means taking a few moments each day or at the end of each week to be grateful for what you have been able to achieve. Acknowledging this is important because otherwise the treadmill effect kicks in – constantly striving without acknowledging the many small successes along the way. There will be times that progress towards the bigger goal is slow or setbacks have occurred but being mindful of the intentions you set and the fact that you stuck to them will keep you motivated and fulfilled.

**Reward yourself too** – whether that's with a manicure, a new outfit, some chocolate or a night out with good friends. Don't wait for the end goal to be achieved to pat yourself on the back for the progress being made.

**“We tend to stick with long-term goals when future rewards are balanced with immediate rewards. Those rewards tend to be more experiential in nature. They are about process rather than results. For example, a long-term goal might be to obtain additional credentials for our area of expertise. An immediate reward would be the pleasure and excitement of learning something new.”**

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# Setting goals you will achieve

First, some wider thinking. It may be that you know exactly where you are and what you want and setting goals to make progress on a particular path is right for you. But have you ever examined that thinking? How excited does that goal make you feel? When you think about what you are planning to have achieved at the end of this year, does your heart leap? Does your gut know for sure that this is right? Does it feel exciting and worth every bit of effort you want to put in? If not, why are you going that way?



## EXERCISE

### TAKE A MOMENT NOW TO PAUSE AND REFLECT...

**My overall goal is to achieve .....** **by .....**

**I want this because .....**

**What does success look like? .....**

**How will I feel? .....**

**On a scale of 1-10 how much do I want this? .....**

### FOR EXAMPLE, YOU MAY SAY...

*My overall goal is to join the Executive Committee by this time next year.*

*I want this because I will have more influence as a member of that senior management group and will be able to implement strategy more effectively.*

*Success will be when I am invited to be a regular attendee and full member of the group by the Marketing Director.*

*That will feel like an acknowledgement of the contribution I can make and will strengthen my confidence and self-esteem.*

*On a scale of 1-10 how much do I want this? 10!*



What if your answer to that last question is 7 or less? Are you actually going in the right direction or would it be helpful to think more critically about what you want?

Perhaps it's time to expand your mindset and **explore new opportunities for growth**. This doesn't necessarily mean a new job or a career change but it could mean a change of direction. Perhaps a sideways move to explore a different aspect of the business.

People talk about applying the principles of disruptive innovation to your career. Never mind the award winning journalist Pattie Sellars' 'jungle gym' approach where your career trajectory can be across and sideways or down (for a good reason) as well as ever upwards on the ladder; this is a **zig-zag career path**. Those who do this well, do it strategically, not randomly, may earn less while acquiring new skills, but they gain greater value in the longer term and their compensation is not only financial but psychological and social. Something to think about.

Whatever your goal, **don't be afraid to change it if your heart is not in it**. If you're not sure of the direction you want to go in your career development, the psychologist Adam Grant recommends that rather than thinking 'plan and execute', think 'test and learn'.

The late author, Sir Ken Robinson, whose work was all about unlocking and igniting the creative energy of people and organisations, maintained that people could only do their best work if they were in their element. He defined it this way,

**“The element is the meeting point between natural aptitude and personal passion.”**

So spend some time thinking about what your natural aptitude is – **where does your heart and interest lie?**

To find your direction, follow your interests, seize every opportunity to encourage your talent and respond to the opportunities that emerge.

**What is your natural aptitude or talent? What aspect of work do you love?**

**What are you passionate about in your work? What creates your energy?**

Drawing these two things together will help you to define who you are and what makes you stand out. The stronger your sense of purpose, the clearer your direction and the easier your goals will be to identify. Your commitment and focus will be natural. Following that path will reward you with greater confidence and self-belief. **Once your ideas become clear, focus on the end result.**



## EXERCISE

### TRY A VISUALISATION EXERCISE

- 1 Find yourself a quiet place, where you can be uninterrupted for half an hour.
- 2 Start with an exercise to empty your mind of all the pressing items on your mental to-do list. Sit upright but relaxed and take a few deep breaths - in through the nose and out through the mouth. This will start to relax you and slow the busyness of your mind. Prepare yourself for a little mental brainstorming. You may want to close your eyes.
- 3 Think about how life will be when you have achieved your goal. Allow yourself to imagine what the ideal scenario could be. Let go of any rules that get in the way or objections that you or others may put up and simply allow your mind free range to think about what you'd like the situation to be if you could have it that way. At this stage, rule nothing out.
- 4 Build a picture in your mind of that optimum situation. Imagine the exact scene at each stage of the day, from waking up to snuggling back down. Be as specific as you can in the picture, the more details you imagine, the more vivid the visualisation will be and the better it will work. Involve all of your senses:
  - What is the picture? What can you see?
  - Who else is in the picture?
  - What are the sounds?
  - Are there smells, tastes?
  - What could you touch?

Include all these things to bring your visualisation to life. Imagine yourself in that role or doing that particular work. Where are you? Who are you with? How will you spend your day? Pull your ideal team together and allocate to them the roles where they will also shine. Picture their faces, see what they are wearing, visualise what the workplace is like. Hear the computer keyboards clicking or feel the fresh air on your face.

What do you feel or experience at these moments? You may feel anticipation for the work ahead. Confident that you've done enough preparation for what is coming next. Eager to learn from an expert on the team. Perhaps even a little nervous on the edge of your comfort zone.



## EXERCISE

**5** Go through the entire day, imagining each step moving seamlessly and successfully towards the next. At this stage, ignore the difficulties and obstacles. Think like an Olympic champion – that’s how they do it. Before the race they focus entirely on winning, imagining every inch of the course, all the way to the winner’s podium. On the starting line the picture is so real they can already taste the success. That is your task right now.

**If you can create a picture of your optimum day, which brings in the full range of typical responsibilities, and see yourself in full colour and detail, getting through it successfully and with as little stress as possible, you will boost your motivation to achieve something similar in reality. The more vivid the visualisation, the easier to remember. Being able to recall this picture when the going gets tough will keep you focused.**

Now you’ll be ready to engage your brain and commit to a SMART plan to achieve your goal.

SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ATTAINABLE	RELEVANT	TIME-BASED
Be very specific about what you want to achieve.	Have an objective, a clearly defined end point.	What exactly do you need to get there?	Make sure your goal is relevant to your overall plan.	Commit to a realistic deadline for each stage and schedule it into your diary.

For example: suppose your overall goal is to get fitter. The first thing you need to do is to be more specific about what that means in your case and how you’ll prioritise the steps needed to get there. Imagine the first element is to exercise more.

SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ATTAINABLE	RELEVANT	TIME-BASED
<i>Go for a run every other day.</i>	<i>Build up to be able to run 5k.</i>	<i>Enter a 5k race.</i>	<i>I am capable of training for a 5k.</i>	<i>Start walking on Saturday this week (date).</i>
<i>Micro-resolution:</i> • <i>Start by walking a circuit of the park.</i>	<i>Micro-resolution:</i> • <i>Challenge Jane to run with me.</i>	<i>Micro-resolution:</i> • <i>Download a ‘couch to 5k’ training plan.</i>	<i>Micro-resolution:</i> • <i>Find the time by getting up half an hour earlier.</i>	<i>Micro-resolution:</i> • <i>Enter local race by (date).</i>

Record your progress against the goals. Natalie Sisson recommends that each morning you look at your journal, notebook, or wherever you've recorded your goals and intentions, check your daily actions, then schedule in time to make them happen. That night you check back and record whether you hit, progressed or missed your action. She points out that just doing that often reveals, after several days and weeks, trends and patterns of what you like to do and what you avoid, which helps you to reset as necessary.

## The power of positive thinking

Keeping a journal is a great way to record your progress. Often we are inclined to focus on the things that did not go so well or actually failed. We worry about problems and hurdles rather than focussing on successes, because to an extent we take them for granted. But it is important to record them for future reference (especially to reflect on them on the days when everything seems to go wrong!) and celebrate them. **Remember, giving yourself little rewards as the various milestones are passed help to boost motivation and keep us focussed on the next micro-resolution or goal.**

Reflecting on progress helps to set daily intentions. *'The last run felt so hard but today I am rested so it will be easier. I'll take the river route and be mindful of the changing of the season and the wildlife on the lake – and I'll play energising music to help me up my pace.'*

And when your motivation wavers, which it will – we're only human, after all – harness the power of positive thinking. **Tell yourself you can and you will.** Use affirmations, call on your supporters, reframe negative thoughts, consciously decide to be happy about things and over time, this will become a habit – a resolution you definitely can keep!

# New year, new you? How to make realistic resolutions and deliver on them

## Additional resources

'Small Move, Big Change: Using Microresolutions to Transform Your Life Permanently' by Caroline Arnold

'Happier' by Tal Ben-Shahar

'The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything' by Ken Robinson

[How "fresh starts" affect our motivation at work](#)

[New year's resolutions don't last. Do this instead.](#)

## everywomanNetwork Resources

[Webinar - New year, new you? How to make realistic resolutions and deliver on them](#)

[Finding your passion and purpose - new year, new you](#)

[How setting goals can transform your life with Sally Kettle](#)

[10 business leaders on the new year's resolutions that will supercharge your career](#)

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Any topics you'd like to see on the everywomanNetwork?

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