

With New Year's Resolutions on Life Support (or Officially DOA), Now What?

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"Lose weight." "Exercise more." "Save money." "Get organized." These are the most common resolutions, but of course there are lots of other possibilities. Many people begin a new year having made some sort of life-altering decision that, *if they could only stick with it*, would have a very positive impact on their lives. Yet we all know that by the end of January, many of us have abandoned our resolutions and returned to our old ways.

So what is a person to do after the resolutions? Many people can easily identify something grand they would like to accomplish, yet they struggle to break it down into manageable, achievable steps. As a result, they set themselves up to fail. One way to avoid this trap is to understand the difference between a *goal* and an *objective*. Without a clear understanding as to how these concepts differ, most people will continue with their lofty ideas, but no clear plan of how to get there. So let's define the concepts:

Goal: Larger ambition or target that you want to achieve.

Objective: Smaller, measurable steps specifically laid out to reach the goal, with time frames attached.

Let's try a couple of examples with some of the most common, and commonly failed, New Year's resolutions:

Goal: Lose weight, 20 pounds in the next three months. (Be sure to make the goal specific; simply saying 'lose weight' is too broad a target.)

Sample Objectives: Work out three times a week for 30-45 minutes; eliminate sweets and fried foods; limit calories to _____ per day; weigh myself every Monday morning to confirm average weight loss of one to two pounds per week; find a buddy to support me in my efforts, with whom I can touch base with daily...and so on.

Goal: Get organized with my household stuff.

Sample Objectives: List everything that needs to be tackled, i.e., closets, garage, desk, file cabinets, drawers, etc. Identify a time frame to complete everything, say, four months. Prioritize the items to do first. Determine a realistic pace that can be kept to, i.e., 'clean and organize one thing per week.' Choose the first objective, such as a closet. Assign everything in the closet to one of three categories: Keep, Throw out, or Donate. Identify a charity to receive the donation items, etc.

Obviously these are just sample objectives which will vary from person to person. However, the *objective* is a critical part of achieving the larger *goal*. It is the objective that provides the accountability and the barometer of progress. A goal without attached objectives is more of a 'wish' than it is a plan to affect any type of actual change.

So, if your New Year's Resolutions have already crashed and burned, think about re-tackling them in a different way. Set a clear goal, accompanied by specific objectives, and you will likely find yourself succeeding in ways you haven't before. For added satisfaction, don't wait until New Year's Day 2015 to give this a shot!