

This year, try 'intentions' instead of resolutions

1 comment by [Karina Bland](#) - Jan. 3, 2010 12:00 AM
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At 44, I'm getting a bit stale. It's not just that I'm moving a smidge slower; even my mind seems sluggish. When asked, "What's new?" I struggle for something interesting to report that doesn't involve my kid's life or work.

My friend Megan says it's not as bad as I think. She points out that there's no way I'm stagnating because I change my hair color more often than most teenage girls. However, that's only because I can't remember what the lady on the box of my hair color looks like.

With the start of the new year, I'm resolving to make a few new trysts with life. I'm going to learn to ride a unicycle, go snowshoeing and maybe take up tap dancing. (I was good at it when I was 7.) I'm also going to , send more thank-you cards and stop talking over people. I'll be a much improved person by the end of the year.

However, I'm not going to call them "resolutions" because, based on my history, I won't keep them.

About half of Americans make New Year's resolutions, according to a study in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* in 2002. The top resolutions are to lose weight, exercise more, drink less, [quit smoking](#) and better manage our money. Obviously, nobody keeps these resolutions, or we'd all be thin and rich.

Every year, I swear I'm going to [lose 10 pounds](#), but by Valentine's Day, I've regained the four pounds I lost in January and put on two more. My plans to go to the gym three times a week never come to fruition, but I drive through Starbucks that often. And as soon as I make a pledge to save , the new Ikea circular arrives.

I'd be better off to reframe my resolutions into more general statements and call them "intentions," says Sharon Lamm-Hartman, president and founder of Inside-Out Learning Inc., in Carefree, specializing in leadership and personal development. As in, "I *intend* to look and feel my best," instead of "I will lose one pound a week." It's a more positive approach.

Otherwise, the first week I don't lose a pound, I'd say all sorts of mean things to myself. This way, anything I do toward my intention - say, eat only one Girl Scout cookie instead of six - can be deemed a

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success.

Often we're not successful because our resolutions aren't realistic, Lamm-Hartman says. If you never exercise, chances are you won't join a gym and go four times a week. But you could commit to walking for 30 minutes twice a week.

My friend Lisa intends to weigh 150 pounds by her 50th birthday, which means she needs to in 15 months. She's taking her time.

Lamm-Hartman says that's good because many people give up on their goals because they require too big a step all at once. Instead of giving up caffeine cold turkey, cut back for the first few months.

My friend Kate intends to be healthy, which means , strengthening her bum knee and getting more sleep. She's going to cook more, eat out less and walk with other moms at school.

"If I swore to lose a pound a week, I'd be disappointed and give up, but I can make a conscious decision to try to do things that are healthy," says Kate, who turns 50 this year.

Lamm-Hartman says to write down your

intentions - no more than two or three or you'll be overwhelmed - and put them where you'll see them, like on your mirror, dashboard or computer.

"Whenever you glance to it, you actually start to feel yourself living it," Lamm-Hartman says.

I'm jotting down three.

First, I intend to sharpen my mind. Though I likely won't take up sudoku, I'll memorize phone numbers instead of just storing them in my cellphone. (I left my cellphone at home one day and was helpless to contact anyone.)

Second, I intend to be more courteous. I'm an over-talker, which means I talk over people when they're talking because I think what I have to say is more interesting. (Usually it is, but that doesn't make it any less rude.) My friend Karen, also an over-talker, claims she can talk and listen at the same time. I can't.

Trying new activities like unicycling will help me with my intention to look and feel my best. As for snowshoeing, my friend Scott says it's not enough. He says I should do something death-defying like bungee jumping or skydiving. But I like that the worst

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that would happen while snowshoeing is that I'll get a stitch in my side - or frostbite.

In six months, you won't recognize me. I'll be the sharp-minded, courteous one who looks and feels her best, albeit with a mild case of frostbite.

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