

Change gear for the new year

New year's resolutions are great in theory, much harder in practice. We asked two experts for their top tips on how to turn your goals into reality. Plus: Five eco-friendly resolutions



1 TIMING ISN'T EVERYTHING

Antipodeans have it lucky when January 1 finally rolls around. Our spring cleaning is done, the weather just gets better, and we're enjoying the energy burst that early summer brings. There's no better time to make a change. Is there?

Karen Ross isn't so sure. "People get to January and they think, *Right, I should be making resolutions, what am I going to do?* That works for some people, but for others it's not quite the right motivation," says Karen, a transformational coach (www.freshwaysforward.co.nz).

A time comes when we're ready to make changes, she says. "When you reach that sense of clarity about what you want ... that's a really good signal."

That doesn't mean now's not a good time. Holidays are a great time for daydreaming, says career and life coach Allison Fisher (www.allisonfisher.co.nz). "There's a lot going on in the world. Thinking takes time and space—something we don't have a lot of." Find a place you think well, she says, and take some time to figure out what you want from the year to come.

2 GOALS WITH MEANING

What do you really, really want? Allison suggests starting big, by identifying your goals in all areas of life. "Career, financial, self-development, physical,

relationships ... write down all the things you might like, what you want more of and less of." Sound like too much writing? Cut pictures out of magazines—your dream house, car, partner.

Next, prioritise. One or two really important goals are enough. "Choose the things that will make a difference to your life," says Allison. "Where do you want to be in five or ten years? What goals will help you get there?"

If you choose to bike to work, say, examine your decision. "Doing things for the greater good has to come from within," says Allison. Whether you're biking for fitness or to reduce your carbon footprint, it's important to identify why it's important to you.

You need to choose something that fits with your lifestyle, says Karen. "When it comes to sustainability, there are lots of ways we can all contribute. "For people who are really into sports, biking's good. If you've never been on a bike in your adult life, choose something else. Start composting!"

3 WRITE IT DOWN

Write your goals down, be precise and use positive language, says Karen. Write 'I will work a maximum of 40 hours per week', not 'I won't work so many hours'.

Next, describe how you'll know you've achieved your goal. "What will you be seeing, feeling, doing, focusing on and saying to yourself when you have your goal? What will others notice?"



To keep each goal fresh in your mind, sum it up in a sentence and stick it beside your mirror, recommends Allison.

4 STRATEGISE

Do your research, says Allison, particularly if your goal is something like losing weight or finding a new relationship. Learn how other people have achieved what you want, what groups you could join and the steps you need to take.

"Planning can make you more comfortable, make your goal more real and make it less scary," she says. If you want to cycle to work, you'll need to plan a route, find places to shower and park your bike, and decide what you'll do when it rains.

5 BREAK IT DOWN

"Knowing how you're going to achieve your goal is vital," says Karen. Break your big goal into baby steps. Each step might involve several actions, she says. Make sure these actions can be completed in a day or a week at most.

Realistic goals, with dates and measurable results, are the key. Identify some milestones and celebrate when you reach them.

Take it slow, says Karen. "It might be starting to do the kids' lunches without plastic wrap. Don't try to do that, and the biking, and start composting all in one week."

6 TAKE ACTION

Don't wait to feel motivated,

says Allison. "Instead of waiting for the energy, take some action—it could be just a small step. Action creates momentum."

It takes 21 days to change a habit so identify your habits and how you can manage them.

"It may be that this whole regime requires getting up earlier, so get up ten minutes earlier for a few days, then 20 minutes earlier for a few days," says Karen. "It's a little bit like acclimatising, just working your way towards it."

7 ENLIST SUPPORTERS

Find a friend to share your goals with and ask your family for encouragement—you'll need a support system. If you're dealing with emotional issues, professional support could be helpful. Encourage and reassure yourself, too—"as if you were talking to your best friend," says Karen.

8 BELIEVE YOU CAN DO IT

Success comes down to attitude, says Allison. "Choose well, believe you can achieve it, and commit to it."

Doubts kill motivation, so banish negative thoughts. And you'll be more likely to believe you can achieve your goals if they're realistic. "Don't resolve never to eat chocolate again; resolve to eat less of it."

9 GET SOME ZEN

Introducing a spiritual aspect helps, say the experts. Embrace

nature, says Allison. "If you want to be fit, maybe it's also about going for walks in the park, or on the beach." If you've resolved to save the planet, even better. "A bigger goal will often have a lot more power behind it, because you're always moving towards something greater than the present," says Karen.

10 STAY POSITIVE

When we pay attention to positive changes, we pay attention to what we want more of, says Karen. "Even if things aren't quite how you want them, noticing what you've done is positive. It's almost like you're turning up that dial of achievement."

And it's okay to fail—but don't be too hard on yourself. Chill out, says Karen. If you can't get to the gym, what can you do instead?

If you're procrastinating, maybe it's time to check your motivation. "I ask clients, 'What's the purpose?'" says Karen. "They might say, 'To live a healthier life'. So what is the purpose of that? You can keep going with the question. That gets into a more abstract level: what is the deepest reason, what am I most going to gain? It could move out towards the environment and the greater good, or towards health and your own well-being."

Most importantly, says Karen, look at how far you've come, at what's working, and what would make it easier or more fun.

Annabel McAleer

Best eco-resolutions

1 Stop driving to work

Investigate your public transport options. Bus services are improving all the time. Cycling to work, or to your nearest train station, could get you fit and help you lose weight. Car-pooling might be an option. Find out about a walking school bus for your children.

2 Pack your lunch

Save money, eat healthier and cut down on the mountains of waste created by takeaway sushi packs, polystyrene boxes and plastic forks. Treat yourself to a bought lunch once a week (eat in for zero-waste).

3 Go organic

Sign up for an organic veggie delivery box. Start your own veggie garden. Discover your local farmers market. Switch to environmentally friendly cleaning products, for your house (think vinegar and baking soda), your laundry and your body.

4 Waste not

Set goals to lighten your weekly rubbish bag. Start composting your kitchen and garden waste. Begin a recycling system, and make sure everyone understands what's recyclable. Stop buying over-packaged goods. Cut down on processed, packaged food and cook from scratch.

5 Get active

Set aside some time every week to make your voice heard. Get political: make contact with your local council and MP, write to a government minister. Exercise your consumer rights: write to manufacturers and retailers, ask about fair-trade practices, complain about packaging. Be a squeaky wheel: phone customer service lines, write a letter to the editor, leave comments on blog entries and newspaper articles. Join a community group, transition town or big organisation like WWF or Greenpeace.