

# On the Edge

Timely, Thoughtful and Always Candid

Volume 1, Issue 2  
January 2006

---

## No More "Next Year I'll" Making New Year's Resolutions Stick

Come on, we've all done it. After the typical holiday season of over-indulgence, we look in the mirror and tell ourselves, *"This year's going to be different!"* And we vow to begin eating healthier (and less often), exercising more and staying at least 100 ft. away from the nearest Dunkin Donuts. Depending on where they're feeling the most guilt, other people promise themselves to get their finances under control, write that will, start a savings plan or just get their closets and garages organized. The problem for most of us is that the zeal to really make those great changes stick is short-lived. After about two weeks, "stuff" happens and we fall back into our old habits for yet another year.

So how do we break this cycle? The good news is that it's really simple! The bad news is that "simple" does not necessarily mean easy. The often-quoted Albert E.N. Gray reportedly once said, *"The only difference between successful people and unsuccessful people is that successful people have formed the habit of doing things that unsuccessful people don't like to do."* Okay, not exactly rocket science, but reasonable enough. So for those of you who are GENUINELY committed to going the extra mile this year, here are 5 steps for giving your 2006 resolutions a fighting chance.

1. **Identify what's really important to you.** Rather than haphazardly committing to a list of random resolutions, start by sitting down and writing a list of your top 5 values. Does it include family? Financial security? Professional success? Education? Community involvement? Health? Your list should be unique to you and not based on what you think others want you to do. Once you've thought through your values, it will much easier to come up with a list of goals that will help you get into closer alignment with them.
2. **Write your goals down in clear, measurable terms.** If your goal is to lose weight, then pick a target. My goal (again) is to reach my ideal weight of 180 lbs. If you want to spend more time with your family, then identify the specific kinds of activities you'll make more time for. Rather than just "start a savings plan," start with a solid goal of XX dollars by the end of the year (or each month). The point is, be sure you write down exactly what you're aiming for so you can lock onto that picture in your brain. Think it, then ink it!
3. **Create a plan of action.** No matter how pumped up you are when you first write down a goal, it's easy to get side-tracked by everyday emergencies and shifts in priority. Prepare ahead of time for these obstacles. If you know that your goals are likely to face time challenges, have a Plan B in place with alternate times to work on them. If you know that business travel has historically nudged you out of your exercise routines, plan how you might work out even when you're on the road. Most of us already know the myriad of reasons why we haven't kept our resolutions in the past...and what will likely hamper our future efforts. With this knowledge in hand, create a road map around them before you even begin the journey.

4. **Review your goals daily.** As the old saying goes, "*Out of sight, out of mind.*" Never was that more true than when applied to New Year's resolutions! My suggestion is to write a portable version of your goals that can be reviewed several times each day. Index cards are great because they're small, durable...and cheap (they even come in colors now). First thing in the morning, before you get out of your car at the office, during breaks, at lunch and before you go to bed, review your goals for a few seconds, imagine how great it will feel to get them done...then put them back in your pocket. If you look at any goal often enough, it becomes a matter of when, not if you'll get it done.
  
5. **Be your own cheerleader.** Nobody's perfect. On those rare occasions when you get off track (and into the drive-through lane at McDonalds), resist the temptation to beat yourself up. Instead of getting frustrated and saying, "*I knew this wasn't going to last,*" dust yourself off and say, "*Hey, that's not like me anymore. Next time, I'll do better.*" Then pull into a parking spot and sink your teeth into that Big Mac. Well heck, you did already pay for it!

- Paul Meshanko

Copyright © 2006. All Rights Reserved.  
This newsletter may be reprinted with permission from the author.