

# Foolproof your Resolutions

...by avoiding these common mistakes

By Blane Bachelor



The champagne has stopped flowing, the ball has dropped, and – if you’re like many women – the next tradition on the list is making a New Year’s resolution to shape up once and for all. Unfortunately, many well-intentioned women are poised to drop that ball, too: According to the American College of Sports Medicine, more than half of those who begin a health and fitness plan at the start of the new year throw in the towel within three to six months. The reason? They get sidelined by roadblocks along the path to fitness.

Here, *H2O* looks at the most common mistakes people make, and the advice to overcome them. Follow it, and by this time next year, that glass of champagne will be a fitting toast to both a new year and a new you.



**Using gimmicky diets.** You’ve heard it a thousand times before, but it bears repeating here: Diets don’t work. Sure, eating only grapefruit for a week or cutting out all carbs might help you drop a quick 10 pounds, but who can eat like that for the rest of their lives? The only proven way to maintain weight loss over the long run is to make lifelong changes to your eating habits.

“You know the foods you enjoy, and the best way to make lasting changes is to make them with the foods you like and can commit to,” says Debi Silber, a registered dietician and nutrition expert based in Long Island, N.Y. “If you take your coffee with full-fat milk and can easily bump it down to two percent, then that’s a change you can stick with.”



**Not banishing boredom.** Every day after work, you drag yourself to the gym, sludge through 30 minutes of cardio, go through your normal circuit routine, and finally eke out a few sets of crunches. Tomorrow – and the next day – it's the same old, same old. Sound numbingly familiar?

Though you get points for exercising, you – and your body – will benefit much more from shaking it up. Studies consistently show that changing your fitness routine is one of the most effective ways to boost weight loss and increase overall fitness, because your body is constantly forced to adapt to new challenges.

“Our bodies are smarter than we are, so your body will know when its time to change it up,” says Melyssa St. Michael, a certified personal trainer and author of “Becoming a Personal Trainer for Dummies.” “Your body gets bored, and your brain stops producing endorphins about what it sees and feels. Is it your music? Your environment? Find what moves you.” Maybe it's heading to the rowing machine instead of the elliptical trainer. Or replacing your usual step class with hip hop. Or forgoing the gym altogether and joining a sports league. Introduce change often, and you'll see results quicker – as well as a renewed commitment to your resolutions.

**Choosing a goal you've repeatedly not reached.** For three years in a row, you've resolved to run a marathon – even though the longest distance you've completed in a race is a 10K. Or, you swear to cut out all sugary snacks – despite the fact that you've had a sweet tooth since you were five. Not surprisingly, these are the type of resolutions that fall short – which makes you feel even worse for not reaching them.

“Resolutions fail when they stand in sharp contrast to what is going on in our lives, and when we take a harsh attitude toward ourselves,” says Dr. Rick Levy, a Maryland-based psychologist and author of the upcoming book “Miraculous Health: How to Heal Your Body Using the Hidden Power of Your Mind” (Atria Books/Beyond Words, Feb. 2008).

“They succeed when they can reasonably be integrated into our lives and when we take a friendly attitude toward ourselves.” That means taking an honest look at your lifestyle and choosing goals you know you can reach. For example, will you really get up early every Saturday morning for a two-hour marathon training run? If not, maybe a more suitable distance is a half-marathon.



**Expecting miracles.** In our fast-paced society, we want results – fast. But it takes time to become overweight and fall into bad eating patterns, and getting back into shape takes time, too. If you've avoided the gym in favor of your couch for the past six months, don't think you'll be able to whip your bod into Victoria Beckham shape by Valentine's Day. Keep in mind the maximum weight loss recommended by fitness experts – a pound a week. Equally harmful is comparing yourself to Victoria Beckham in the first place.

“What I always stress to my clients is to look your best, not like celebrities or models in the magazines,” Silber says. “It's about finding your most comfortable weight and where your body wants to be, and what you can naturally maintain.”



**Not enlisting help.** Especially when it comes to fitness, studies have shown that assistance from a professional – a personal trainer, for example -- greatly improves people's success rate. But if you don't have the budget to shell out for a trainer, look for other sources to help you maintain accountability.

“Whether it's through a journal, your kids, or your husband – when you're accountable you're much more likely to stick with it. Taking responsibility for yourself is huge,” says Silber. A workout partner is great, too – you're much less likely to hit the snooze button if you know your friend will show up for your run before work.