



## Well-Being: New Year's Resolutions

New Year's resolutions....we've all set them, but how many of those resolutions have actually taken hold? We decide that this is going to be the year we get active, lose those last ten pounds, clean out the garage, start saving for retirement, etc. We get fired up thinking about what we will achieve but by Valentine's Day, we've long forgotten about those resolutions. Why is it that something that sounds so good and may actually be in our best interest is so quick to fall by the wayside?

Well...it all has to do with habits. Merriam Webster defines a habit as "an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary." A habit is like driving your car on a dirt road in mud season. The more you do it, the deeper the ruts get and the harder it is to pull your car out. Habits are easy. They're familiar and comfortable. They require no thinking and as the definition states, are often involuntary. The idea that we can change a habit or develop a new habit in only twenty or even sixty days is nonsense. Think about how long you've been behaving like you do, driving in that same rut. Those ruts are deep. It will take patience, time and consistent practice to form a new path, a new habit but there are things we can do to facilitate the process.

According to author James Clear (Clear, 2018) there are five strategies which can dramatically help us change or implement a new habit. 1) don't try to change everything at once; 2) start small; 3) focus on the process instead of the outcome; 4) pay attention to the environment; 5) remember that small changes can lead to big results. You can hear more from James [here](#). I'd like to add a sixth strategy to James's list and that is to connect with your "why". In her book, "Emotional Agility" (2016), author and Harvard professor Susan David says that "when you discover and reconnect with the things that really matter to you, your daily decisions will be much easier". When we have a strong emotional connection to our values, it's much easier to choose the right action.

So, when you're thinking about what you want to achieve in 2019, think also about who you want to be and how you want to live your life. Define the outcomes you want and the values you want to uphold. Let your values guide your actions. Utilize James's five strategies to help you get one percent better every day and you'll be amazed at where you'll be one year from now.

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Want to learn more? Check out these great resources:

Brewer, J. (2016, February 24). A simple way to break a bad habit [TED talk]. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-moW9jvvMr4>.

Clear, J. (2018). [\*Atomic habits: An easy & proven way to build good habits & break bad ones.\*](#) New York, NY: Penguin Books.

David, S. (2016). [\*Emotional agility: Get unstuck, embrace change and thrive in work and life.\*](#) New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Duhigg, C. (2012). [\*The power of habit: Why we do what we do in life and in business.\*](#) New York, NY: Random House.

Goldsmith, M. (2015). [\*Triggers: Creating behavior that lasts-Becoming the person you want to be.\*](#) New York, NY: Crown Publishing.

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