

K-State Research and Extension News for January, 2020
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It's New Year's Resolution Season – Be SMART in 2020!

Every New Year's Eve, millions of Americans resolve to make their life better. Whether that includes getting healthier, becoming wealthier, or striving for a work-life balance, these resolutions often don't go any further than thoughts in our minds.

Set your intentions for the New Year by writing down what you want to give your attention to in 2020. Research shows by writing down your intentions, you are more likely to work toward them and succeed in reaching them. Out of that list of intentions, rate and prioritize what is most valuable and important. Then set goals. Lacking goals is like taking a trip without making a plan or having a destination; you'll never know where you are going to end up.

Written goals increase your chances of accomplishing the behavior you desire. Written goals make it easier to plan action steps, monitor progress and define the end date. Setting a goal such as getting healthier this year is not specific enough. Behavior change occurs if there are written goals which include a deadline.

Improving your life requires planning; and it starts with setting SMART goals. SMART goals should have criteria that correspond to each of the following categories: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound.

- Make goals that are SPECIFIC: Clearly defined or outlined; the Who? What? Where? When? and Why?
- Make goals that are MEASURABLE: How will you measure your progress; what do you want to do?
- Make goals that are ATTAINABLE: Neither too easy, nor too hard to accomplish. Is it likely to happen; is it achievable, what steps are involved?
- Make goals that are REALISTIC: What knowledge, skills, resources and abilities are necessary to reach this goal?
- Make goals that have a TIME LINE: When will it start; when will it finish? Will it be a short-term goal or a long-term goal? Set a specific deadline to the goal.

Identify small, do-able “action steps”. Procrastination is easy. Tomorrow always seems like a good day to make changes. With the small steps approach, anything you do towards your goal is a step in the right direction. No step is too small to get started.

Consider the major obstacles that keep getting in your way. Identify them and make plans to

overcome them. Is it denial, fear, lack of clear goals, or just not knowing where to start? Obstacles and relapses are normal. Prepare for them by thinking of the following:

- What are obstacles that keep me from achieving these goals?
- What are strategies to overcome each obstacle?
- What factors have caused me to relapse in the past?
- What can I do to address these factors in the future?

Friends or family can be a resources or an obstacle. Enlist the support of the people that will help you be accountable to your goals. Make a commitment to change so they can be encouraging and motivating to you on your journey.

Often goals seem insurmountable; but put your mind to it. Negative thoughts such as “I can never do this” are common. Instead, think positive thoughts, such as “I can do this one small step at a time”. Keep imagining how good it will feel to reach a goal.

Finally, take time to celebrate all of the small steps you achieved along the way. Taking small steps, being realistic and staying positive will help you keep your intentions in the New Year!

Source: Glenda Wentworth, University of Colorado Extension.