



#2018Goals

We've converted some of the top New Year's resolutions into real promises you can make to yourself—and not break.

BY BARBARA BRODY

● **The new year feels like a fresh start**—a chance to wipe the slate clean. In reality...it's not. We can't snap our fingers and expect our habit of stopping by the drive-through on the way home to magically disappear. But come January 1st, a bunch of us try. "Many people confuse a resolution with a wish," says John C. Norcross, PhD, a psychologist and distinguished professor at the University of Scranton. "It's fine to wish for something, but what are you going to do to make it real?"

To help you sort out that very issue, we've taken four common New Year's wishes and transformed them into rock-solid resolutions. The most crucial part of that process: making sure the goals are realistic and specific. Once you've picked your resolution(s), write it down—along with a list of reasons why it's important to you and how you'll track your progress. (That's another success-boosting strategy.) Say goodbye to fading dreams and hello to an awesome reality!



Mindfulness for Busy Moms

Books to help you tame the chaos and quiet your mind

→ ***Breathe, Mama, Breathe* by Shonda Moralis** With 65 different 5-minute mindfulness exercises, one (or more) is sure to help you find your center.

→ ***The Tiny Book of Tiny Pleasures* by Irene Smit and Astrid van der Hulst** Toss this diminutive gratitude guide in your purse and thumb through it when you need a reminder of all that's good.

→ ***You Have 4 Minutes to Change Your Life* by Rebekah Borucki** Quick practical techniques from a certified yoga and meditation instructor who's also a mom of five. Yeah.

"I Want to Live More Mindfully"

Maybe mindfulness sounds like something other people do, or that you would do—if only you could find the time. It's easier than you think.

This year I will... find a tangible item that reminds me to stay grounded daily. Snow globes work for Andrea Brandt, PhD, the author of *Mindful Aging*. "At my workshops, I shake one up and explain that those snowflakes represent all the thoughts going on in your head at any moment, and how that blizzard is distracting you from living in the present," Brandt says. "Breathe slowly as the flakes gently settle to the ground, until you're left with the stillness and beauty at the end

of a fresh snowfall." You might also try carrying a worry stone or wearing jewelry with a peace symbol or mandala.

This year I will... do a quick de-stressor every time I start to feel frazzled.

As soon as you feel the pressure building, take one hand and grab the other and start massaging it with your thumb. Find any tender points as you breathe slowly. "I'm trained in Oriental medicine, but you don't need to know acupressure points to do this," says Pedram Shojai, author of *The Art of Stopping Time: Practical Mindfulness for Busy People*. "Poke around, find the tender spots and massage them. That's it."

This year I will... meditate for just 5 minutes a day.

All you have to do is sit quietly and listen to your breath while trying to be non-judgmental about whatever pops into your head. "Just breathe," says Brandt. "Focus on your chest heaving and your tummy expanding." Or use an app to guide you, like Insight Timer, The Mindfulness or Headspace.

This year I will... take at least one contemplative walk every week.

Maybe sitting still with your thoughts just isn't for you. That's OK. Go outside and take a few deep breaths as you pay attention to the sensations throughout

your body. Then go for a stroll. "When you practice walking meditation, you simply walk with awareness," says yoga and Ayurveda expert Micah Mortali, director of the Kripalu Schools. "Focus on the sensations in your body: Feel your feet in contact with the earth. Take in the sights, smells and sounds of walking."



Learn more ways to chill in an instant: familycircle.com/instant-stress-relief.



Your
Desire

"I Need to Exercise More"

Whether you're stuck at a desk, in a car or both for most of the day, you can kick your sedentary habits to the curb.

This year I will... take at least one seated activity and find a way to make it active.

Walk around your cubicle while listening in on a weekly conference call. If you shuttle kids to sports practices, chat with the other parents for a few minutes, then walk the field or do a strength training routine, says Pete McCall, CSCS, a spokesperson for the American Council on Exercise (ACE). Hit the floor for crunches and stretches during the commercials of your favorite shows. Or try walking or biking for part of your commute.

This year I will... explore new activities until I find something I love.

Once a month or once a week, try something different. Take a hot yoga class, explore CrossFit, find a group to snowshoe with. Keep at it until you find a workout so fun you'll make time for it—no matter what pops up in your day.

This year I will... be active for at least 30 minutes a day, 3 times a week.

Get your calendar right now and figure out when this will happen. Block off 30 minutes every Wednesday to walk during your lunch break or commit to Zumba every Thursday night. The options are endless, but doing the

pre-planning is crucial, says McCall, who is also host of the *All About Fitness* podcast.

This year I will... find a buddy or app that will keep me accountable.

You're more likely to succeed when you have to answer to someone besides yourself, says Michael Dansinger, MD, a medical director of lifestyle programs and former nutrition expert for *The Biggest Loser*. Find a willing friend or family member to meet you at the gym, or download an app that will push you. We like StickK (which makes you sign a commitment contract to yourself) or Fitocracy (which offers check-ins from a coach for a fee).

How Fit Are You?

You might not even break a sweat with this quick test, but you will find out where you stand. Can you...

- **Hold a plank** (with your hips and shoulders level) for 1 minute?
- **Do 12** full-body push-ups or 20 modified ones?
- **Balance** while standing on one leg for 1 minute? Try it on both sides.

If you're not quite there yet that's OK, but these are good goals to strive for. "Each test demonstrates that multiple muscle groups are able to work together to generate and control force," says McCall. "Being able to work up to these numbers will indicate a healthy level of strength and, more important, coordination."



Get your #fitspo right here with our list of hot new classes to try: familycircle.com/new-workout-classes.



*Your
Desire*

"I Need More Energy"

If you can barely drag yourself out of bed in the morning, it's time to make sleep a priority.

This year I will... stop hitting the snooze button.

"The average snooze cycle is seven to nine minutes—not long enough for your brain to get back into a deep state of sleep," explains clinical sleep specialist Michael Breus, PhD. So it's not restorative sleep. Instead, just set the alarm for when you must get up and get on with your day. As with bedtime, keep your wake time consistent so that your body gets into a rhythm. After a few weeks you should find that you're naturally more alert (not desperately seeking caffeine) when your alarm goes off.

This year I will... get out of bed if I can't sleep.

Quit counting sheep into the hundreds. "You don't want your bed to become a stressful place," says Rebecca Robbins, PhD, a sleep researcher at NYU School of Medicine. "Read a few pages of a book in another room, and come back when you're tired again."

This year I will... refresh my bedroom to evoke relaxation.

Return whatever Christmas gift you don't want and buy a comfortable pillow, a lusciously soft comforter or anything else for your bedroom that screams—or rather whispers—zen, says Robbins, who is also co-author of *Sleep for Success!* And it's

worth taking a moment to rid your room of electronic gadgets that are emitting too much light, which interferes with your body's get-sleepy signals.

This year I will... set a cut-off time for my daily to-do list.

You can't go from tidying up the house and packing lunches to drifting off to sleep in an instant, says Robbins. Do the math: Take your desired bedtime and subtract one hour. That's when you need to start the wind-down process. Next, establish a relaxing nightly ritual—perhaps something as simple as taking a warm shower—that will eventually signal to your body that it's power-down time.

A.M. Alert

As soon as you open your eyes, check for these symptoms of health problems that could be tied to a bad night's sleep.

→ **Achy jaw** You may have a temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorder. "Jaw clenching or teeth grinding can lead to both soreness and headaches," says Shilpi Agarwal, MD, a family medicine and integrative physician in Washington, DC. See your internist or dentist.

→ **Sore throat** Talk to an allergist. A chronic sore throat in the a.m. often indicates post-nasal drip, because mucus has been irritating it all night long.

→ **Sour taste in your mouth** GERD (chronic reflux) could be causing a backflow of acid. See your MD or a gastroenterologist.

→ **Exhaustion** If you're still tired after getting plenty of rest, ask your doctor or a sleep specialist if you have sleep apnea and aren't getting enough oxygen during the night.



Find out how to create the bedroom of your dreams: familycircle.com/bedroom-decor-ideas.



**Your
Desire**

“I Want to Eat Better”

Improving your diet can help you lose weight, boost your mood and avoid getting sick.

This year I will... keep junk foods out of the house.

If you were serious about quitting smoking, you wouldn't carry around a pack of cigarettes. Then why put bags of chips in your shopping cart? If you're buying snacks for the kids, OK. But then leave them for the kids: Store them in a cabinet you'll mark as off-limits for yourself.

This year I will... give my snacks a healthy makeover.

You're quitting the carb-heavy snack club. Those kinds of snacks don't have much staying power and are easy to

overdo. “You want something with both protein and fiber so that you'll be satisfied longer,” says Lyssie Lakatos, RDN, a dietitian, personal trainer and co-author of *The Nutrition Twins' Veggie Cure*. Try some edamame, a stick of string cheese with a piece of whole fruit, a hard-boiled egg with some baby carrots or a handful of whole-grain crackers with a little hummus.

This year I will... fully immerse myself in the experience of eating at least once a day.

“Your brain needs to register smell, texture, flavor and consistency, otherwise it'll keep sending signals to eat more even after your stomach

is full,” says Shojai. Be extra mindful during at least one meal—smell what's on your plate for 20 seconds, chew at least 20 times before swallowing and put down your utensils between bites to savor the taste.

This year I will... aim for at least 8 glasses of water and 25 grams of fiber per day.

The cure for feeling deprived? “I always ask people to focus on what they can do more of instead of taking something away,” says Rachele Dependahl, RDN, at Cedars-Sinai Medical Group in Beverly Hills, CA. Water should top the list, since it's easy to confuse thirst signals with hunger. If you're having

3 Apps That Make Healthy Eating Easier

→ Fooducate

Scan food product bar codes and get a quick nutrition grade along with suggestions for healthier alternatives.

Android and iOS, free

→ Lifesum

Tracking habits isn't such a drag when the app feels like a game. A premium subscription offers a variety of diet plans and lots of recipes with detailed nutritional info.

Android and iOS, from \$22/3 months

→ Rise

Get paired with your own nutrition coach, snap photos of your meals and receive real-time feedback and support.

iOS, from \$48/month



Check out our RD-approved list of 25+ healthy store-bought snacks at familycircle.com/healthy-snacks.