

[PDF] Lose It!: The Personalized Weight Loss Revolution

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Description:

About the Author Charles Teague is the CEO and cofounder of FitNow, the makers of Lose It! He lives in New York City. Anahad O'Connor is a health and science reporter for the New York Times, with a weekly column in the Tuesday Science section. He has appeared on NPR, Good Morning America, and The Martha Stewart Show. He lives in New York City.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Foreword by Gretchen Rubin, author of The Happiness Project A few years ago, I decided to embark on a "happiness project." I spent a year test-driving the wisdom of the ages, current scientific studies, and lessons from popular

culture to see what worked. If I did all the things I'd always intended to do and followed the advice I'd heard over the years, could I actually become happier? I didn't make a dramatic upheaval to my daily routine—just little changes, here and there. When the year was over, I was surprised by how easily I'd changed my life without changing my life. I really did manage to make myself happier. I organized my happiness project around resolutions—everything from “Quit nagging” to “Make my bed” to “Sing in the morning” to “Keep a one-sentence journal” to “Imitate a spiritual master.” My happiness project convinced me that resolutions—kept faithfully—can make a huge difference in contributing to happiness. If you want to make a positive change in your life, a very effective strategy is to figure out what resolutions to make and how to keep them. Keeping the actual resolution will boost happiness, of course, but even apart from that, the sense of growth, of having made a vow to yourself and stuck to it, the sense of self-mastery...all these things are enormously satisfying.

The challenge is that, no surprise, it's fun and easy to make a resolution, but it's very challenging to keep a resolution. Something like 44 percent of Americans enthusiastically make their New Year's resolutions—I know I always do—but many of us make and break the same resolution year after year; in fact, about 80 percent of resolution makers abandon their resolutions by mid-February. Year after year, one of the most popular resolutions (along with other perennials like “quit smoking” and “spend less”) is the resolution to lose weight. Alas, about two-third of dieters gain back the weight they've lost within the year.

These facts are pretty discouraging. Does that mean it's pointless to make resolutions? I don't think so. You can't succeed unless you try.

But if you really want change, you have to think about it, plan it, probe it, keep yourself accountable, and have a plan—just reflexively saying “This year I'm really going to eat healthy” won't make it happen.

Having tried and failed to uphold many resolutions myself, I'm fascinated by the question of what allows people to keep resolutions. Why does one person decide to drop 20 pounds and manages to do so without much fuss, while another person battles those same 20 pounds for decades? Why does one couch potato suddenly decide to start going to the gym and then works out regularly for years, while another couch potato just can't get off the couch?

One key to sticking to a resolution, it turns out, is to hold yourself accountable. The constant review of your resolutions, and the knowledge that you are being held accountable to them, makes a huge difference. So how do you hold yourself accountable? Here are some useful strategies:

1. Frame your resolution in concrete actions. If you resolve to “Eat more healthfully” or “Lose weight,” it's hard to hold yourself accountable. It's easier to be answerable for a specific action, like “Eat five servings of vegetables and fruit every day” or “Bring my own lunch to work four days a week.”
2. Be accurate. When you're trying to do something like lose weight, it's important to know how much, and how many calories, you're eating. Studies show that people tend to underestimate dramatically both the portion size and calorie content of their food, but to change what you're eating, you have to know what you're eating.
3. Keep a chart. Having made a resolution, you have to check yourself in some way. Keeping a written record is an excellent way to keep yourself honest and mindful; a chart acts as a reminder that allows you to keep your resolution active in your mind and to mark your progress. Also, seeing what you've achieved in the past is a powerful source of motivation for the future. Give yourself those gold stars!
4. Join with other people. Even more useful than keeping a chart is knowing that real, live people are cheering you on—and holding you accountable. Also, research shows that we enjoy activities more when we do them with other people.
5. Commit to an action. Studies show that taking an action, like signing a pledge or registering for a program, will help you hold yourself accountable for your resolutions.

People who are trying to make life changes such as losing weight are more likely to succeed when

they tell others what they're doing. Lose It! is an excellent tool that makes it quick and convenient to combine all these strategies.

With Lose It! you can easily track the food you eat and the calories you consume every day—no more airy guesses. “Well, nuts are healthy, so it's probably okay to eat as many as I want.” “Gosh, I haven't eaten much today, I don't think, so I deserve a brownie. Maybe two brownies. Okay, three.” “I pick up dinner at my favorite fast-food place a few times a week, and that's probably...what? About 400 calories a shot?” Lose It! reminds you what you've eaten and tells you the consequences, so you can make choices that support your resolutions.

Making better choices adds up over the long haul. We often overestimate what we can get done in a short amount of time—“I'm going to lose 8 pounds in 2 weeks!”—and underestimate what we can get done over a long period, by making small changes—“I'm going to lose 30 pounds this year.”

By keeping you accurate and accountable, Lose It! makes it easier to stick to your diet—or even better—eventually to give up food monitoring all together. We all want to reach a point where we eat healthfully, automatically, every day, without being “on a diet.”

Mindfulness is one of the keys to happiness, which is unfortunate for me because I'm not a very mindful person. But the Lose It! program can help anyone develop mindfulness while eating because it prompts us to pause, to think, and to appreciate our food.

Founding Father Benjamin Franklin is a patron saint for people trying to keep a resolution. During his life, in addition to signing the Declaration of Independence, investigating electricity, inventing bifocals, founding one of the first volunteer firefighting departments, and acting as ambassador to France, Franklin kept a chart of the thirteen qualities he wanted to cultivate. Once a day, he'd score himself on whether he'd observed such virtues as “temperance,” “silence,” “industry,” and “frugality.” Of this chart, he observed, “though I never arrived at the perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it, yet as I was, by the endeavor, a better and a happier man than I otherwise should have been had I not attempted it.”

While no book or mobile application can ensure that we'll stick to our resolutions perfectly, they can help us to do better. And by doing better every day, we can work our way to healthier and happier lives.

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