

● Ask America's Ultimate Experts

Q "Please help me keep my New Year's resolutions!"

If you're one of the 150 million Americans who make resolutions, you know how tough it is to stick to them. But don't give up! Whether you'd like to lose weight or get more organized, you *can* do it with our experts' advice!

1 Get a jumpstart on success!

Beginning with a positive mind-set can double your chances of keeping your resolutions, say life coach Ariane de Bonvoisin and leadership consultant Judith Wright. And that means:

Skipping this word!

Believe it or not, it's "resolution!" Since a lot of us end up breaking our New Year's resolutions, we tend to associate the word with failure—which immediately undermines our efforts! Solution: Use the word "intention." It seems simple, but studies show that adopting the right language really can make your goal seem more achievable.



Turning your goal into a gain!

Most resolutions are about cutting things out of our lives, such as sweets, which puts the focus on giving up something we love. Instead, state your resolution as a positive: For example, rather than saying, "I have to lose weight," try, "I'm going to become healthier by eating better."

Staying motivated with this sentence!

Just jot down why you made the resolution in the first place. Say you're trying to save money for a vacation. Write: "I'm saving so I can enjoy a stress-free break!" Carry the note with you, so you can read it when your enthusiasm flags.

Delaying your start!

With most of us exhausted from the holidays, the last thing we want to do on January 1 is start a new fitness routine or diet. Instead, tell yourself you'll start "by the end of January." Having a less-firm start date will help you avoid the risk of missing it and giving up altogether.

2 Outsmart those "I-give-up" moments!

At some point, you're going to want to throw in the towel—and that's totally normal! To keep going strong, Wright and sociologist Martha Beck, Ph.D., recommend:

Focusing on day four!

Whenever we try something new, our brains usually resist the change—that's why resolutions are so hard to keep in the first place! Fortunately, Beck says, sticking to your goal for just four days is enough to melt away the resistance! Why four days? Because that's how long it takes people to break bad patterns they were locked into—and start new ones!

"Cheating" past roadblocks!

Allow yourself some setbacks. If you don't expect perfection, you won't feel crushed when you slip up, so it'll be much easier to bounce back! Consider: Studies show that dieters who let themselves have a treat every now and then lose more weight than people who rigidly stick to their plans.

Spreading the word for support!

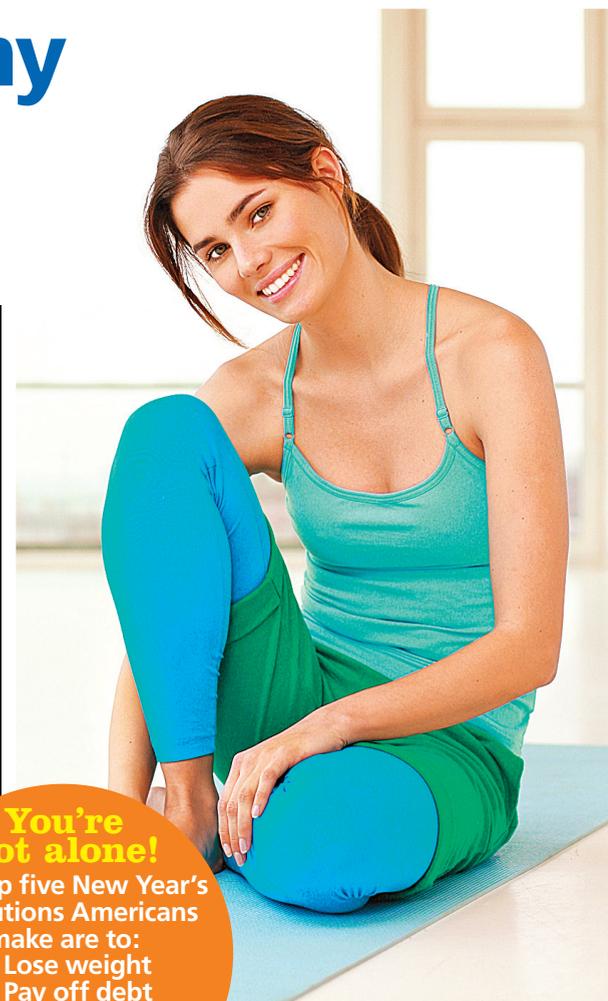
Women are 10% more successful in reaching their goals when they share them with others—and gossip about their ups and downs! So let your best friend know what you're working toward, then reach out for support when you need it.

3 Can't-miss moves to fulfill your dream!

Now that you're well on your way to making your 2009 goal a reality, Wright and de Bonvoisin reveal how to stay the course to the finish line! Try:

Getting expert help online!

There are some great websites designed



You're not alone!

The top five New Year's resolutions Americans make are to:

1. Lose weight
2. Pay off debt
3. Save money
4. Find a better job
5. Get in shape

to help people achieve specific goals—for free!

Want to lose weight? Try fitday.com. Looking to organize your finances and save money?

Visit wesabe.com. Prepping to run a marathon? Go to coolrunning.com. Have a different goal? Google it!

Savoring the moment!

Every time you inch closer to your goal, give yourself a big pat on the back—just telling yourself "Great job!" will do the trick! Sound silly? It's not! Researchers have found that being your own cheerleader boosts your confidence and reminds you that yes, you can do anything if you really want to. As a result, keeping on track will feel less daunting and more like fun!

—Whitney Joiner



Our expert panel



Ariane de Bonvoisin is the founder of first30days.com, a site that helps people manage life changes, and is the author of *The First 30 Days* and has been featured on NBC's *Today*.



Inspirational speaker **Judith Wright**, best-selling author of *The Soft Addiction Solution* and *The One Decision*, is the founder of The Wright Leadership Institute. She has appeared on *20/20* and *Good Morning America*.



Dubbed by *USA Today* as "the best-known life coach in America," Oprah favorite **Martha Beck, Ph.D.**, is the author of the best seller *The Four-Day Win* and the newly released *Steering by Starlight*.