

Why do you want to make the change? Will it improve your life? What are your reasons for making this change?



Make a Plan

You've got a goal. Now how do you get there? Break your goal into subgoals or small steps. Think about how to make each small step. Rather than emphasize the long term goal, consider daily goals. What daily changes must you make to achieve your long term goal? What action steps must you take?



Again, write to clarify your thoughts and help yourself identify the steps needed to achieve your goals. Are these steps small? Achievable?



Monitor and Reward Progress

Keep track of your progress and reward your achievements. We tend to assume that success is its own reward, but change is difficult and often uncomfortable. Additional rewards will help you to make change effective and last over the long haul. Rewards can include treats like a massage, facial, or afternoon at the movies. Or they can include less tangible rewards, such as simply taking time to yourself to do whatever pleases you.

Change for Life

Once you have achieved your goal, maintain your success by continuing the small daily changes that helped you to achieve your goal. For long term success, make those small changes part of your lifestyle.

Goal-Setting: Not Just for New Year's

By Tara Kuther, Ph.D

Are you thinking about making the new year a fresh start? Not so fast! Some say new year's resolutions are a waste of time as they are nothing more than a long list of "shoulds" that we don't take to heart. Make this year different. Take time to plan your new year's resolutions carefully and avoid the post new year let-down. Let's face it, graduate students don't have a lot of time to waste on new year's resolutions that aren't effective. Plan your new year's resolutions carefully this year and choose realistic goals that you can keep.



Choose Carefully

A long list of resolutions will set you up for failure. Think carefully about what you'd like to change. Conduct a short self-evaluation to determine what

goals are right for you. Choose only one or two goals as your resolutions. Be honest with yourself. Your goals should be achievable and realistic.



Use writing as a tool to help you identify and decide upon your goals. First, review your year. What were the high points and low points? What were your successes? What made you proud? Now think about where you can improve. Are any of these areas ripe for a resolution? Sometimes thinking about the past semester will help you identify areas to improve.

As you consider possible changes, think carefully about each one. Is it realistic? Is it achievable?