

At the stroke of midnight, the New Year gives a clean slate for long-elusive resolutions

January 1 2024, by BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and DANIEL KOZIN



2024 glasses are displayed ahead of New Year's Eve in Times Square, Friday, Dec. 29, 2023, in New York. Credit: AP Photo/Yuki Iwamura

It's an annual end-of-year exercise in futility for many. But a clean slate awaits at the stroke of midnight for the next round of resolutions.

From the first spray of fireworks to the closing chorus of "Auld Lang Syne" 366 days into the future—2024 is a leap year—it could be the year for finally achieving long-elusive [goals](#), fulfilling aspirations and being resolute on all those New Year resolutions.

"As humans, we are creatures that aspire," said Omid Fotuhi, a social psychologist who is a motivation and performance researcher.

"The fact that we have goals, the fact that we want to set goals is just a manifestation of that internal and almost universal desire to want to stretch, to want to reach, to want to expand and grow," said Fotuhi, the director of learning innovation at Western Governors University Labs and a research associate at the University of Pittsburgh.

"New Year's resolutions are one of those ways in which we do that," he said. "There's something very liberating about a fresh start. Imagine starting on a blank canvas. Anything is possible."

If so, could this be the year to run a marathon, vanquish (or make peace with) old foes such as the bathroom scale and a thickening waist? Maybe learn Mandarin or register to vote, and actually vote? So many questions, and so much time to delay.

Tim Williams used to issue himself a panoply of resolutions: lose weight, drink less, exercise more and yada yada.

Now, he doesn't bother.

"In the past, I would make them, and I would fail or give up on them or whatever," said Williams, a part-time resident of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Carla Valeria Silva de Santos, a Florida transplant from Brazil, wants to

learn to play the guitar. A native Portuguese speaker, she wants to learn Spanish and improve her English.

With any resolution, she said, the ultimate goal is "to improve your life and be in peace with yourself."

Josh Moore, another Fort Lauderdale resident, sees things in line with the natural philosopher Sir Isaac Newton and physics. For every action there must be an equal reaction.

"If you do something like eat a bunch of candy or a bunch of desserts at a [holiday party](#), go run," he said while interrupting a jog with his dog. "Maybe you went out drinking too much and you might have a hangover. But then next day when you're feeling better, go to the gym."

Too many people are too soft on themselves, he posited. "You've got to actually hold yourself accountable."

Resolutions don't have to be big, grandiose or overly ambitious, Fotuhi said.

Even if they are, he said value should not exclusively be derived from the achievement but also be measured by what you become by trying to better yourself.

"Goals are only there to serve a function to get you started," Fotuhi said. "If they don't do that, then maybe that's not the appropriate goal for you."

In other words, it is a time to recalibrate goals and expectations, he said, adding that some people hang on to outdated goals for way too long.

"If you set a goal that's overly ambitious, that doesn't have the effect of

getting you excited and making you believe that it's possible, then maybe you should think about a goal that's a little bit more within your reach—starting with a 5k for instance, then moving up to 10K," Fotuhi said.

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Citation: At the stroke of midnight, the New Year gives a clean slate for long-elusive resolutions (2024, January 1) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-01-midnight-year-slate-long-elusive-resolutions.html>

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