

GENTLE JANUARY

breathes out

First 10 pages FREE!

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Start the year with a gentle reboot

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DECLUTTERING

Small goals for January

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decluttering without stress

1

Get a box that is not too big, not too small and put it somewhere you will notice it.

2

Decide where it will go when it is full of clutter and how it will get there

3

Add one thing to it every day

keep what you love

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DECLUTTERING BINGO

Get rid of one thing a day

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decluttering bingo

shoes	cosmetics	bedding	hats and scarves	coats
books	ornaments	pots and pans	paperwork	craft stuff
herbs and spices	mugs	emails	water bottles	candles
duplicates	junk mail	old tech	CD's or DVD's	old undies
plastic containers	towels	magazines	pictures	maps

just declutter one thing!

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GENTLE JANUARY

Forget resolutions

January is often a time for resolutions and clean slates. It can be really tempting to start a strict diet or pull out all your clothes to declutter them. Gentle January is a different approach that is more likely to make you feel better. Resolutions are hard. It takes a lot of motivation and discipline to stick to the slightest pledge you make to yourself and the failure rate of goal based resolutions is high.

A study by the University of Scranton tracked 200 resolvers over 2 years. Over ¾ of the respondents kept to their resolutions for a week but only 19% of them for 2 years. Stress was one of the key reasons people gave up or slipped on their resolutions.¹

Feeling like a failure

In 2019 the most common resolutions according to YouGov were exercising more (50%), saving money (49%), eating more healthily (43%), and losing weight (37%).

Everyone starts off with the best intentions but I'm sure we have all experienced the 'sod it' moment when we slip up. It could be a single ginger biscuit eaten on a strict no carb diet that leads to a big pasta dinner because you feel you have already ruined your diet. On a good day you might be able to return to the diet the next day but most humans are more black and white about our slip ups. We can feel that one tiny error can ruin the whole thing.

¹ www.researchgate.net/publication/223679624_The_resolution_solution_Longitudinal_examination_of_New_Year's_change_attempts

Failing resolutions can make you feel terrible, which can lead to more ginger nuts to make you feel better, which works in the moment but in the long run makes you feel more terrible. If we apply a bit of cognitive behavioural therapy to this problem we need to look at the place in the timeline where we can break the cycle.

Not starting a resolution in the first place can be more a lot more beneficial than trying and failing.

No resolutions

If you can take the pressure to be totally perfect away you stand a better chance of making changes long term. Here are a few ideas.

Shorten the timescale

The Scranton study told us that 76% of people can stick to a resolution for a week. If you really feel like you need to make a big change, try it for 7 days, or 5 and have the weekend off. If that works, do it again the week after.

Lessen the change

"No more sugar" is an honourable but difficult challenge to stick to. Try "Only one ginger nut a day" or "Chocolate at the weekend only" instead. Achieving tiny little goals will give you a tiny little endorphin rush and make you feel like you are winning, which you are.

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RESOLUTION BUSTER

Make it manageable

Start at the bottom of the mountain

If you were considering a mountain climb you would generally start at the bottom. Bigger mountains have base camps along the way. To get to the base camps you put one foot after the other, breaking the climb into many small steps.

This worksheet is to help you find actions you can take daily that help you get to larger goals. For example my goal might be to reduce clutter, my base camp might be to sort out my clothes and my tiny steps would be to declutter one thing every day.

Write down a big goal

Define a base camp

List some tiny steps

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DEFINE TINY ACTIONS

Break down those goals

You can use this page to break down some of your big goals into things that are achievable. Remember you don't need to do them all, this exercise will help you see an overview so you can pick and choose what will work for you. Print it out, or use the layout idea in a notebook.

Big goal

Big goal

Base camp

Base camp

Tiny steps to get there

Tiny steps to get there

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LISTING TINY ACTIONS

Small daily goals

Use this space to write down all the tiny actions that will help you reach your goals.

Do you see any similarities or patterns?

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MAKING NEW HABITS

Stacking and pinning

In his book Atomic Habits, James Clear wrote about habit stacking. Instead of relying on willpower or determination, the idea is to attach a new habit to an old one. This forms new neural networks that help us keep to our new habits, it actually becomes more difficult to ignore them than do them.

James has a formula for stacking habits. It looks like this:

After I [Old habit] I will [New habit].

After I [brush my teeth] I will [do ten sit ups].

What are you doing?

This exercise is to find the spaces where we might be able to add a new good habit.

For example, after I wake up I feed the cats, put the kettle onto boil then I go to the loo and brush my teeth. I make a cup of tea and turn the laptop on. I do this every single day. Every evening I draw the curtains and before bed I wash the dishes (most days) and brush my teeth.

There is space in my routine to add new things in. I wait for the kettle to boil and I wait for the laptop to warm up. If I wanted to get a bit fitter I could do a couple of squats or star jumps in that time.

If I wanted to make decluttering a new habit I could open the drawer nearest the kettle and get rid of a few bits of junk.

It might help you to write down what routine you have now and what habits, good or bad emerge from that routine. Just paying

attention to them will help you see patterns emerge and spaces where you can start to build on your existing habits. You might not have a set daily routine and that is fine, there will be things that you do everyday regardless and that is what you need to look out for.

Keep it small

If you decide to add [running a marathon] to an existing habit of [brushing your teeth] you are setting yourself up to fail.

Keep the new habit small, tiny even.

Remember you can build onto it and you are more likely to succeed if you feel like you are improving in some way.

Make it conditional

Another way to build up good habits is to make them conditional on something you really want to do.

I don't like going out for walks in the rain, but I do like speaking to my friends on the phone. I've made it conditional that I only phone friends for long chats when I'm out on a walk, so I have to go out for a walk if I want to speak to them.

What habit fits

When I draw the curtains I'm already standing up, so that might be a good time to get in a bit of a stretch. Once you notice your daily pattern you will be able to design new habits that fit in with it.

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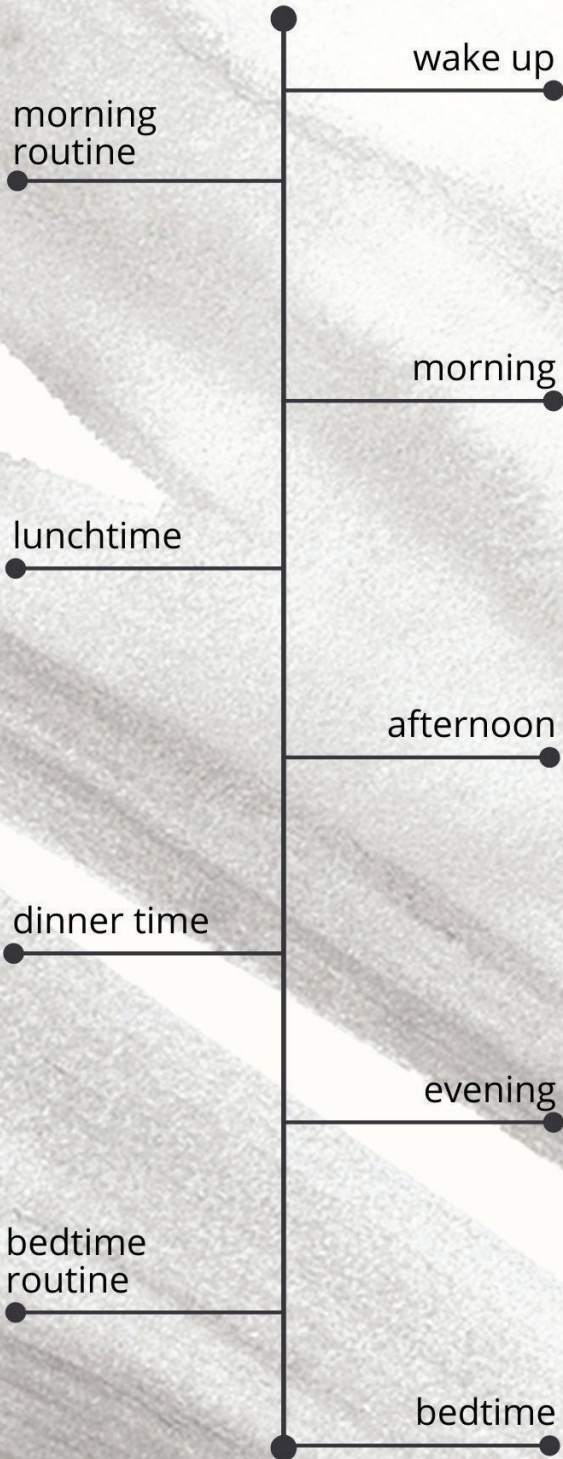
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finding time



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Find the time

Use this timeline to write down what you do in a day and to find your existing habits.

Your days might be very different but they will probably have some constants like brushing your teeth and boiling the kettle.

If you work split shifts or have a week with big routine changes it might help to make more than one of these timelines.

Notes

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