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# A NEW YEAR'S HABIT

## Why Resolutions Fail and How to Beat the Odds

If you're one of the 50 percent of Americans who view the new year as a perfect time to make a positive change in your life, the odds are stacked against you. Research from the University of Hertfordshire in the U.K. found that 88 percent of New Year's resolutions fail. But don't feel discouraged! Here are three steps you can take to help your New Year's resolution beat the odds:

### Don't Be Abstract

According to Dr. BJ Fogg of Stanford University, New Year's resolutions tend to fail because "people aren't picking specific behaviors. They're picking abstracts." This means we're identifying vague destinations we want to reach without creating a map for how to get there.

With resolutions, ask yourself "How?" What action steps will you take? "I'm going to enjoy life to the fullest and see a new play every month," or "I plan on getting healthier by no longer drinking soda." Start with tiny steps that you can build on to become better habits in your life.

### Take It One Resolution at a Time

Stanford University's Professor Baba Shiv says people can suffer from "cognitive overload." That is, our prefrontal

cortex — the part of our brain responsible for handling things like resolutions — doesn't do well with too many tasks. Pick just one resolution you care about, and you'll be more likely to succeed.

### Remember, Setbacks Aren't Failures

We're only human, and we're going to make mistakes. Just because you broke down and ordered that double cheeseburger, skipped a workout, or bailed on going to that new swing dancing class doesn't mean your resolution is finished. A New Year's resolution only fails if you stop trying.

There is something very poetic about starting good habits on the clean slate of a new year. By taking these steps, you can make sure those new habits stick.



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If you thought the holidays ended in December, you must not be from Puerto Rico! Many Latin Americans know that Christmas is just the start of the holidays, with 12 nights to go until Three Kings Day — also known as the Epiphany. Growing up, it was Three Kings Day that we *really* looked forward to.

We all know the story about the wise men, who followed the Star of Bethlehem to Jesus. But most people don't realize the wise men didn't arrive on Christmas; in fact, the star only started burning *after* Jesus was born. The wise men used the star as a guide on their journey, and Three Kings Day celebrates the day when they actually arrived — usually January 6.

As kids, we'd write letters to our favorite king and send a wish list similar to the Santa letters that American children write. It was also important to leave cookies out for the kings and, especially, leave grass for their camels — usually in a shoebox. We'd leave them out on the night of January 5, and on January 6, we'd wake up and see the presents the kings left us.

There was always a family party as well, and my parents made sure that we spent time with others. It was especially important to them that we help others who were less fortunate, which is why we always went to a facility that helped children who'd been neglected and abused. Volunteering there reminded us that service to others is also what the holidays are about.

As an adult, I'm navigating the waters between my Christian heritage and my Jewish identity. I converted to Judaism after I married my husband, and we're raising our son in the Jewish faith. At the same time, I want to preserve some of the magic I saw, spending Christmas in Puerto Rico. So far we've managed to celebrate both — although it's a little tricky finding grass in our D.C. suburb in January!

For me, Three Kings Day is really about spending time with family and the fond memories I have of growing up surrounded by Puerto Rican culture. It's strange, because in the United States, nobody really celebrates Three Kings Day. Sure, you'll get three kings and one camel with a nativity set, but in Puerto Rico, they'll actually have images of the kings *everywhere*, both accompanied and unaccompanied by other nativity figures. You just don't see that here.

I've tried to keep some of that tradition alive for my own son. It's important to me that he learns about his Puerto Rican heritage, while observing the Jewish faith. It's also important that he approaches the holidays with charity in mind. Though, the season of giving should be all year round!

I know that on January 6, back in Puerto Rico, there will be parties and plenty of good food. And I think, for at least one more year, we'll be hunting down grass for the camels here in D.C.

- Melina Pérez Halpern



# BAD WEATHER?

THE KITCHEN IS OPEN

Your family plans have been blown away by a storm, trapping you inside for the day.



MELIHA AND HER SON, COOKING UP A STORM!

You've run out of ideas, the kids are bouncing off of the walls, and the collective singing of "I'm bored" is starting to wear you down. And the worst part? It's lunch time. So, how are you going to pass the time and keep bellies full?

Turn your kitchen into a restaurant! Choose a theme, and help your kids decorate the space. Tablecloths, wall art, and fun place settings are a great place to start. Put on some themed music that corresponds with the type of restaurant you're opening, and now you really have a party!

After the decorating is done, have your kids decide what foods the restaurant will serve, then let them create their own menu — complete with hand-drawn pictures. While they're completing the menu, take some time to set out ingredients.

Arrange an assortment of fully cooked foods, and turn food preparation into a taste combination party. Your food and flavor combinations don't need to match what's on the menu — that's what imaginations are for (and the chef's special). A cracker with toppings could very easily become a fancy pizza! Macaroni and cheese with ham could be a decadent pasta dish never before seen this side of the Mississippi.

Once the best combinations have been made, it's time to eat. Sit down and enjoy your specially prepared meal. If you have time, try to put together some dinner theater. You can make up stories, have a puppet show, or pretend to record a TV commercial to advertise your new restaurant. Now, don't forget — a good kitchen staff works together to clean up after the restaurant closes for the day!

# THE WINTER CHILL

HOW THE COLD AFFECTS YOUR BODY'S PERFORMANCE



If you're a devoted athlete, you won't let anything stand in the way of your training. Even if it means battling blizzards, you have work to do. Temperature changes, and even if it's only minor, this change has a large impact on your body's performance.

## Body Temperature

Training in the cold weather does have its benefits, especially if you've had a few too many Christmas cookies this year. Not only does your body have to burn enough calories to sustain your workout, but it also has to burn enough to keep you warm. Your heart keeps up with the increased stress by metabolizing glucose — the fuel your muscles use — which in turn takes away from your performance.

## Reaction Time

Ask any chemist, and they'll tell you that temperature plays a large role on chemical reactions. The standard rule of thumb is that reaction rates are halved for every 18 degrees the temperature falls. This becomes problematic for your body, as your muscular contractions are based on a series of chemical reactions. The cold

causes your arms and legs — the muscles furthest away from the warmth of your core — to move less efficiently and require more energy.

## Muscle Fatigue

Your muscles are made up of a mixture of slow- and fast-twitch fibers. The slow fibers are meant for aerobic exercise and do most of the work. The fast-twitch fibers are meant for quick, explosive movements. In the cold, however, it's all hands on deck, and your body uses both sets of fibers for a job that usually only requires one. This, in turn, leads to a larger level of lactic acid, which means an increase in metabolic load. At that point, you are entering oxygen debt, and you'll either have to stop or reduce output.

# GOING GENERIC:

## When Brand Names Are a Bad Deal



Most shoppers assume that buying name-brand products is the right decision, because the slight premium gives you better quality. But when you opt for generics or store brands instead of name-brand items, you save an average of 30 percent, and as much as 52 percent, off some items!

Companies spend billions to convince people that their brands are worth the money — then they charge higher prices to make back all of the money they spent on advertising! In reality, staple items like milk, labeled with the store's brand, are not only adequate, but sometimes better. That's because they're

produced regionally. Even generic soft drinks are pretty much the same as the big brands. So if you're not a soda snob, it isn't worth the extra money.

In health care, the FDA ensures that generic medications contain the same active ingredient dosage and safety measures as their brand-name counterparts. Since the quality between a generic and brand-name medication is practically identical, the savings can be substantial.

How about gasoline? Well, unless you're in the 16 percent of Americans who drive a

high-performance or luxury vehicle, buying premium is just burning up the extra money. However, off-brand gasolines are bad for your vehicle, causing a buildup of carbon deposits in the engine that can damage your vehicle and reduce fuel economy.

Obviously, there are some brand-name products that are absolutely worth the extra money. The point is to do your research and never assume that paying for brand-name products automatically means you're getting more value — because often, all you're doing is paying more than you need to.

## PUERTO RICAN BAKED CUSTARD

# Flan

Recipe inspired by [bbcgoodfood.com](http://bbcgoodfood.com).

## Ingredients

- 2 ¼ cups sugar
- 5 eggs
- 1 (13-ounce) can evaporated milk, undiluted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract



## Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Caramelize a round 8-by-3-inch aluminum pan by melting 1 cup sugar, slowly, in the pan to a light gold. Swirl the pan to coat bottom and sides with caramel. Set on wire rack.
3. In a saucepan, break eggs, without beating, just enough to mix egg yolks and whites. Add the rest of the ingredients, mix and strain.
4. Pour strained mixture into the caramelized pan. Set pan in a large shallow baking pan containing about 1 inch of hot water and bake for about 1 hour or until set and golden. Remove pan from water bath.,
5. Allow to cool on wire rack. Cover and set in refrigerator. When ready to serve, turn custard onto a platter.

## PUZZLE YOUR BRAIN BREAK CORNER

### Sudoku Rules:

- Use numbers 1-9 only.
- The full grid is 9x9 cells.
- The full grid is broken into 9 regions, 3x3 cells each.
- Each region can contain only one of each number 1-9.
- Each cell can contain only one number.
- Each row and column should contain only one of each number, 1-9.

		6	2				3	
	5			6	1			2
9		3			8	1		
			8		9			6
5		4	1					8
8	7	2						4
4	6	1		5				

1	2	9	7	8	7	9	6	8
6	8	7	2	5	6	1	9	7
6	4	5	6	5	4	2	8	8
6	8	9	2	3	2	7	2	4
5	3	4	1	2	6	7	7	8
2	1	7	8	4	6	3	3	5
9	2	4	7	8	1	6	5	5
7	5	6	3	6	1	4	9	2
1	4	6	2	9	8	6	8	3